

CHILDREN'S SUPPLICATION IN CLASSICAL ATHENS.
RELIGIOUS SKILLS, SURVIVAL AND INFERIORITY*

SUPPLICACIÓN DE NIÑOS EN LA ATENAS CLÁSICA.
HABILIDADES RELIGIOSAS, SUPERVIVENCIA E INFERIORIDAD

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ABSTRACT

The present paper explores children's experience as supplicants to authorities in power as a vital tool for coping with life-threatening circumstances in classical Athens. The examination of the specific characteristics of children's performance, as it is represented in literary and artistic sources, reveals the inability of minors to execute all the stages of the rite of supplication. Children's participation was demonstrated principally in the physical aspects of supplication, while they were unable to perform the verbal, argumentative element of the

RESUMEN

El presente artículo aborda la experiencia de los niños como suplicantes ante las autoridades en el poder como un mecanismo fundamental para hacer frente a las circunstancias amenazantes para la vida en la Atenas clásica. El análisis de las características concretas de la actuación de los niños, tal y como aparece representada en las fuentes literarias y artísticas, revela la incapacidad de los menores para ejecutar todas las etapas del ritual de suplicación. La participación de los niños se manifestaba principalmente en los aspectos físicos de la suplicación, mientras

* Greek authors and texts are cited according to the editions of *TLG* and abbreviations of *OCD* unless otherwise noted. Epigraphic and iconographic abbreviations follow *OCD*. Translations of the passages discussed are mine.

ritual, which generally was carried out in its prescribed form by adults who accompanied the children, and initiated and supervised the rite. The incapacity of children, as the article shows, correlates with the stereotypical inferiority and weakness that defined the stage of childhood in classical Athens. Hence, unlike other religious activities which involved minors and reflected a successful socialization process, the rite of supplication spotlights children's position as societally weak members of the community.

que estos eran incapaces de realizar el acto verbal, argumentativo del ritual, que generalmente era llevado a cabo de la forma prescrita por adultos que acompañaban a los niños e iniciaban y supervisaban el rito. Como demuestra este estudio, la insuficiencia de los pequeños guarda relación con la inferioridad y la debilidad estereotípicas que caracterizaban la infancia en la Atenas clásica. Por lo tanto, a diferencia de otras actividades religiosas que involucraban menores y reflejaban un exitoso proceso de socialización, el ritual de la suplicación destaca la posición de los niños como miembros socialmente débiles de la comunidad.

KEYWORDS

Children; Performance; Silence; Speech; Supplication; Weakness

PALABRAS CLAVE

Debilidad; discurso; niños; performance; silencio; suplicación

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1. INTRODUCTION: SOURCES, MODEL OF THE RITE AND CLASSIFICATION OF CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE

Literary and artistic sources from the classical period testify to children's participation in the rite of supplication (*hiketeia/hikesia*), which was one of the most prominent ceremonial acts in Greek religion, as is widely documented in multifaceted sources from Homer down to late antiquity. *Hiketeia*, in the generalized, most broad, definition, was a ritualized appeal, within a religious context or connotation, for protection, help or mercy directed to divine or human authority, accompanied by distinctive wording, ritual objects and body language, and performed in situations of extreme distress. Given the observation that the practice seems not to be limited by ethnicity, social status, gender or age, sources provide evidence of children performing the act already in early infancy, in both private and public arenas.

The purpose of the present paper is to spotlight the under-explored area of children's *hiketeia* as an age group,¹ in 5th and 4th cent. BCE Athens, by analyzing children's experience as supplicants, as represented in the literary and material sources. Concurrently, by locating children's performance of the rite in a wider socio-religious, cultural and legal context, this study will demonstrate how the ritual of supplication, unlike other religious activities involving minors which primarily reflected a successful socialization process, clarifies children's stereotypical inferiority and weakness, which in contemporary classical Athenian perception were defining characteristics of the age of minority.

1. By "children", I mean individuals younger than the age of legal and social maturity in classical Athens, males younger than 17-18 (Arist., [*Ath. Pol.*] XLII, 1; cf. Ar., *Vesp.* 578) and prepubescent females, under the marriageable age of mid-teens (e.g. Pl., *Leg.* 833d2-4). Most sources do not provide fixed ages, and, at best, settle for age-group cues, see Crelier, 2008, pp. 101-110; Seifert, 2011, pp. 29-33; Beaumont, 2012, pp. 17-42; Golden, 2015, pp. 10-19.

The biggest methodological difficulty in reconstructing children's experiences of contemporary reality in ancient Greece is that the majority of the materials, textual and iconographical, were created by adult men and referred mainly to a male target audience. There are almost no historical children's voices in literary sources, and regarding ritual activity there is not one direct hint from the children themselves. Therefore, what may be extractable about the specific characteristics of the minors' *hiketeia* in sources is limited to the selection and distortion caused by the representations of ritual behavior through an adult-generated lens. For that reason, an examination must take into account children's social position and religious status as it was prescribed and viewed by adult members of the community

Sources referring to children's activity in Greek religion in the Classical period provide far more information than that found about any other aspects of minors' familial and communal experience, while the majority of documentation comes from Athens. Various materials provide glimpses of the *hiketeia* of children, although not all of them are informative to the same extent. Historiographical writings, where children *per se* were hardly of central interest,² and iconographic representations, which consist mainly of the delineation of mythological child characters, provide only occasional documentation. Likewise, the texts of comedies contain only sporadic references of a parodic nature, whereas epigraphic evidence does not mention children at all. Recurring references to children's participation in religious ritual are found especially in Attic oratory and tragedy, two genres wherein the emotional articulation of pity, *eleos* (ἔλεος), (whose connotations differ from those of modern empathy or compassion) are crucial and are closely interconnected with the child's inherent innocence.³ However, the most details and vivid representation of ritualistic performance can be drawn especially from tragedy, where child characters are at most associated with religious activities. While tragedy does not pretend to present reality as it is, it does, nevertheless, display religious practices drawn from materials well known to the contemporary audience from their own ritual reality.⁴ *Hiketeia* figures in a significant number of tragic plays, being dramatized either as a central topic of the plot

2. Golden, 1997, pp. 183-184.

3. Cf. Arist., *Rhet.* 1385b13-16 for a definition of *eleos* as "a particular pain at an seemingly destructive or painful evil occurring to a person who does not deserve it; an evil which one might expect himself or one of his close circle to suffer, and when it seems close at hand" (ἔλεος λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένῳ κακῷ φθαρτικῷ ἢ λυπηρῷ τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγχάνειν, ὃ καὶ αὐτὸς προσδοκῆσειεν ἂν παθεῖν ἢ τῶν αὐτοῦ τινα, καὶ τοῦτο ὅταν πλησίον φαίνεται.); and cf. *Poet.* 1449b27-28. For *eleos* in Greek culture as emotion which is filtered by social, moral and cognitive channels, see Konstan, 2006, pp. 201-218.

4. Sourvinou-Inwood, 2003, pp. 1-14 and 201-458; 2005, p. 10.

(Aeschylus' *Supplices* and *Eumenides*, Euripides' *Heraclidae* and *Supplices*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*) or, most commonly, employed in the key scenes of the play. Children are staged in supplication scenes in about seven of the surviving tragedies and the increased pathos provoked by their tender age and implicit vulnerability in these scenarios of despair and helplessness led quite a few researchers during the 20th cent. to argue for the close link between supplication and children's pathetic impact as a key consideration in the casting of children.⁵

The source material documents that, similarly to adult supplication, that of children was an act that was carried out in a variety of contexts, in divergent performative ways, with different goals, and included appeals to heterogeneous authorities. However, as will be shown, there are significant differences between the performance of children and of adults, which are especially expressed in the disparities in the spoken portion of the ceremony. In order to extract the salient characteristics of the performance of minors, it will be useful first to present the general outline of the rite. Naiden's in-depth study (2006), including a wide range of documented examples of *hiketeia* in classical antiquity, and which convincingly refuted Gould's (1973) previous perception of *hiketeia* as "ritualization of reciprocity", serves here, with attendant modifications and reservations, as a useful tool for identifying the rite's phases.

Defining supplication as a system that incorporates both legal and ritualistic aspects, Naiden distinguishes four main temporal phases comprising the *hiketeia*: (1) an approach to an individual or sacred object or place (referring to the suppliant's movements),⁶ and (2) a distinctive body language and wording, both signifying passivity, submissiveness and self-abasement, and employment of standardised ritual attributes (e.g. raw wool draped on branches). These elements, used in whole or in part, denoted suppliant status and ritual behavior, and their physicality contrived a concrete connection to the human or sacred object of address, such as reaching out toward an altar, tomb or dead person's body, or clasping/touching the knees or chin of an addressee, or kneeling, and sometimes stretching/extending hands to his direction.⁷ The step which follows is (3) a plea/request, generally accompanied by

5. See esp. Menu, 1992; cf. Devrient, 1904, pp. 3 and 11; Wilkins, 1993, p. 49 on 10. For pity and re-evaluation of *pathos* created by child figures on stage in suppliant scenes, referring to the contextual complexity of the scenes in which they appear, see Griffiths, 2020, pp. 223-230.

6. *Hiketeia* (ἱκετεία) / *hikesia* (ἱκέσια), as the basic Greek verbal term of the rite *hiketeuō* (ἱκετεύω), derives from a root meaning "to approach" (Frisk, 1960, s.v. "ἱκέτης" and Chantraine, 1970, s.v. "ἱκω"). For comprehensive discussion, see Létoublon, 1980.

7. For suppliant's verbal and physical behavior, see Gould, 1973, pp. 75-78, 95-100; Freyburger, 1988, pp. 503-505; Létoublon, 2011, pp. 298-302; Naiden, 2006, pp. 29-104 (with list of classical period sources

argumentation comprised of promises, threats and appeals to pity, and (4) judgment and response from the authority to whom the supplication has been addressed as to whether to accept or refuse a suppliant's request.

The disparity between the performance of minors and adults, as shall be demonstrated, is primarily evident in children's lack of initiative and lack in proficiency in the verbal element of the rite, primarily the request couched in the most persuasive of terms, which served as a necessary tool to stimulate the addressee's response, and to increase the chance for his positive judgment.⁸ These deviations, as will be demonstrated in discussion, reflect and validate the classical Athenian perception of children as incomplete individuals who are characterized by objective imperfection and weakness.

The second axis along which the study will move is that of the religious sphere. For religious practices, which enabled minors to integrate into the family (nuclear and extended) and to interact with their peer group, provided the main channel and platform for children into the life of the civic community in the Athenian *polis*, contributing to their sense of familial and communal identity. Therefore, citizen children were perpetually engaged in a variety of cultic roles, from birth until coming of age, as well as being exposed to routine ritual activities of the family and within the community environment.⁹ Their roles moved through a wide range of engagement, from passive observation to assistance, collaboration and agency.¹⁰ A review of the sources reveals a surprising degree of correlation within three clear categories of children's involvement defining their marginality/centrality in the performance of *hiketia*: 1) children as speechless assistants/observers to adults' figurative supplication in courts; 2) children as operative participants in a group; 3) a child as a single or primary suppliant.

This demarcation will allow for a more precise examination of children's ritual behavior, which will be conducted in accordance to the generic nature of the evidence and the particular contexts in which *hiketia* is located.

in *app.* 1a, pp. 302, 307-308, 315-316, 319, 335); cf. *ThesCRA* III, s.v. "hikesia" I, C-D.

8. Naiden, 2004, pp. 82-83 and 2006, esp. pp. 13-14.

9. See in particular Neils, 2003; Beaumont, 2012, pp. 64-86 and 152-186; Garland, 2013; Golden, 2015, pp. 26-28 and 35-43.

10. For pictorial representations of children as observers and assistant participants in votive reliefs from the second half of the 5th cent. onward, see e.g. Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. no. 1532. Cf. Cohen, 2011, pp. 482-483 and fig. 28.9. For detailed discussion, see Lawton, 2007 and an exhaustive catalog in Seifert, 2011, pp. 300-336 and pls. XII-XX, figs. 26-42; cf. also Beaumont, 2012, pp. 153-160. For funeral ritual, see in particular Seifert, 2011, pp. 38-48 and Langdon, 2015; for children as main mourners, see Eur., *Alc.* 393-415 and *Supp.* 1123-1164 with Haussker, 2020, pp. 205-212 and 217-223.

2. CHILDREN IN LAW COURTS: SPEECHLESS ASSISTANTS

Entreaties in courts indeed provide an interaction between legal regulations and traditional practices of the *hiketeia*. These scenarios, particularly (but not limited) to cases where conviction might carry heavy penalties, mainly involve a verbal behavior of supplication as part of the defendant's plea,¹¹ but provide little if any information on the proper ritualistic environment, as well as gestures and objects such as boughs or an altar.¹² Hence, children's roles in the ceremony, which are often expressed through the bodily performance of the rite, as I will demonstrate in discussion of two other types, are extremely limited in courts and can be defined as only speechless support by their very presence.

The language which articulates pity, along with the presence of innocent family members on the podium, was a special and typical device of forensic entreaty, often located in epilogues, after the defendants' presentation of the case. Within this framework the practice of bringing the respondents' children to the law court to consolidate an appeal for mercy seems to have been common.¹³ Generally, the defendants point to the destructive effect of their potential conviction on their innocent kin, especially elders, women and children,¹⁴ as vividly illustrated by Aeschines, who in his final appeal to the judges' pity presents on the podium his family members divided into their age groups (II 179). Sources do not provide clear evidence as to whether children were allowed either to speak or to testify as witnesses in courts,¹⁵

11. See e.g. *Lys.*, IV 20; *Aeschin.*, II 179-180; *Dem.*, LVII 1, 70; *Isae.*, II 2. Cf. Johnston, 1999, pp. 115-118, 173 n. 50; Gould, 1973, p. 101. For critique of employing supplication before judicial authorities, as emotive manipulation that may divert judges from purely legal considerations, see *Dem.*, XXIV 50-53; Plato (*Ap.* 34c-35d) provides also ethical and religious aspects.

12. Aristophanes' *Plutus* (382-385), where children are in court accompanying their father who holds boughs (ἰκετηρίαν ἔχοντα), cannot be indicative for use of the accoutrements of the *hiketeia* in Athenian courts, since the scene of the rite is imaginative and suffers from confusion and exaggeration; the character, Blepsidemus, as Sommerstein (2001, p. 164 on 377-385) argues, demonstrates the severity of Chremylus' crime by supplicating at an altar of Zeus Agoraios (Zeus of the Agora), on the Pnyx, on which the suppliants before the Assembly used to lay boughs (*Arist.*, [*Ath. Pol.*] XLIII 6; Rhodes, 1985, p. 528); and cf. *Dem.*, XLIII 83 for metaphoric use of bough in reference to a defendant's child. For gestures of self-humiliation, such as grasping the hands of the juries before entering the courtrooms, see *Ar.*, *Vesp.* 552-556; cf. *Ps.-Xen.*, *Ath. Pol.* I 18.

13. See *Pl.*, *Ap.* 34c-d, [*Lys.*] XX 34-35; *Isoc.*, XV 321; *Andoc.*, I 148; *Aeschin.*, II 152; *Dem.*, XIX 281, 310; XXI 99, 182, 186-188; *Hyp.*, II 9, IV, 41; *Ath.*, 592e. Cf. Golden, 2015, pp. 35, 77-79; Apostolakis, 2017, pp. 138-149. For jurors' expected emotional response interconnected with considerations regarding children's future as adult members of the community, see esp. Griffiths, 2020, pp. 232-234.

14. Such as orphanage, widowhood and denial of care for older parents.

15. Golden, 2015, pp. 35 and 168, n.79.

and it is probable that they would not be afforded a full role in the Athenian legal system while under the age of majority. However, they were used to support the defendants' plea by approaching the podium and weeping, providing visual and aural effects; those effects are most vivid in the comic scene in Aristophanes' *Vespae*, where the small children of the defendant bend their heads or cower together [in fear or self-obedience] and produce sounds (568-572):

... τὰ παιδάρι' εὐθὺς ἀνέλκει
 ... τῆς χειρός, ἐγὼ δ' ἀκροῶμαι,
 τὰ δὲ **συγκύψανθ' ἅμα βληχᾶται**· ... ὁ πατήρ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν
 ὥσπερ θεὸν ἀντιβολεῖ με τρέμων τῆς εὐθύνης ἀπολύσαι·
 "εἰ μὲν χαιρεῖς ἀρνὸς **φωνῆ**, παιδὸς **φωνῆν** ἐλεήσαις."

... he raises up, drags his little kids up there
 ...by the hand, and I listen
 for they are **cowering together** and **wail in chorus**,¹⁶ and their father (standing) above them (or: for their sake)
 is begging me, trembling, as if I were a god, to release him from conviction:
 "If you enjoy the **voice** of the lamb, please pity (that) child's crying **voice!**"

(The highlights here and below are mine)

Such comic evidence of a parody of the customs of Athenian courts allows for scenes in courts to be reconstructed, thus supplementing the information that oratory evidence provides. Biles and Olson (2015, pp. 263-264 on 568-569) note convincingly that Aristophanes' choice of the diminutive τὰ παιδάρι' ("his little kids"), adds a dimension of pathos and reflects the litigant's strategy. The children's young age is attested by the verb ἀνέλκει (raise up) with τῆς χειρός (by hand), which means that they are taken by the hand or lifted up so that they could be seen in front of the jury.¹⁷ Another example of the minors' tender age which prevents them from comprehending the devastating consequences of their father's conviction is attested also in Aeschines II 179: ... ταῦτ' ἅμ' ἐκ τῶν μικρὰ μὲν παῖδια καὶ τοὺς κινδύνους οὐπω συνιέντα... ("and these little children who do not yet realize the dangers"). Their vulnerability

16. For βληχᾶται meaning as "wail in chorus", see MacDowell, 1971, p. 209 on 570; cf. Aesch., *Sept.* 348-350.

17. McDowell's interpretation of ὁ πατήρ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν in 570 (1971, p. 209) as the phrase could indicate the father's protection of his children may be reasonable, although it could just indicate differences in height.

as well as their inferiority are elements of the defendant's argumentation, and these two characteristics are stressed by locating children among the weak members of Athenian society, women and elders, with whom they share the podium in assistance to the defendant (cf. Dem. XXV 84). The children probably needed instructions in order to render that assistance, such as when to approach the podium and what exactly to do when they stood there. According to Apostolakis' plausible suggestion (2017, p. 139) the middle voice ἀναβιβάζεσθαι in [Lys.] XX 34 might allude to the approach of children to the podium, which was preceded by a gesture of invitation, following, most probably, appropriate preparation. Such preparation would have been done beforehand, where the children were given instructions "by their father or the logographer, and are told how to cry and behave in order to seem pitiable", just as special instructions are given to Labes' puppies in Aristophanes' *Vespae* (976-978) in a parodic image wherein the defendant's offspring are brought to the podium and even weep not naturally but by instruction.¹⁸

In terms of the discussed articulation of the ritual in courts, it can be determined that children most probably performed mainly an approach, while it is uncertain whether they used specific gestures or employed defined postures. They most assuredly did not participate in the verbal phase. The latter was fulfilled by the defendant adult only, while the arguments which were raised in the children's presence focused on the aspect of mercy, which correlates with their assistance, as was manifested in sources by the sounds of crying.

3. OPERATIVE PARTICIPANTS IN A GROUP

The class of suppliant children as operative participants in a group is perceptible conspicuously at the public altar or shrine. For this category the evidence provides more details of minors' performance than in courts, revealing a picture of familial or communal solidarity along with the limitations of children, expressed mainly by the lack of initiative and absence from the presentation of pleas and arguments.

The communal plea for mercy or protection from a sacred figure featuring the presence of children is prominent in tragedy, in addition to its occasional appearance

18. "Where are his children? Come up here, poor creatures, and present your request in tears and pleas" (ποῦ τὰ παιδιά; / ἀναβαίνειτ', ὦ πόνηρα, καὶ κνυζούμενα / αἰτεῖτε κἀντιβόλειτε καὶ δακρύετε); and see further for instructions in Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Andromache*.

in vase paintings and sporadic allusions in historiography.¹⁹ Four tragedies feature children's supplication in the opening scene of the play. In the prologue of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* (440s-420s BCE)²⁰ children are among the citizen members who, after a processional entrance,²¹ approach and sit at the steps of the altars as suppliants before Oedipus' palace (1-3, 15-17, 31-32, 59), with olive branches wreathed in wool (2-3, 143),²² begging for salvation from a plague (cf. Thuc., II 47, 4). Children, defined as "nestlings not strong enough for flight" (... οἱ μὲν οὐδέπω μακρὰν/πτέσθαι σθένοντες ... 16-17),²³ implying their young age and powerlessness, share their participation in that public ceremony with selected youths and elders (15-19).²⁴ They performed the suppliant's gesture in silence, until all the suppliants are directed to move following their successful supplication (142-143). The verbal part of the ritual was executed by an old priest, who supervised the procedure (14-57, 147-150). The case is a unique example in tragedy of mass supplication involving all the members of the community. Such a wide array of participants encompassing the entire population is mentioned in historical documents, which may indicate the actuality of group supplication in situations of extreme communal danger, and though the participation of children is not recorded specifically by the ancient historians, it may well be implied, e.g. Ephesian supplication to Artemis under Croisus' attack ca. 560 BCE (Hdt., I 26; Polyainus, *Strat.* VI 50). Another mass supplication oft-mentioned in sources was the entrenchment of thousands of Messenians in Mt. Ithome after taking advantage of the earthquake in the 460s to revolt against the Spartans (Third Messenian War). The Messenians made themselves suppliants of Zeus of Ithome (Zeus Ithomatas), together with their families, wives and children, and remained in the sanctuary for

19. In classical sources there is no evidence for children's supplication by a hearth (unlike that of adults e.g. Hom., *Od.* VII 153; Thuc., I 136, 3).

20. For dating see Finglass, 2018, pp. 1-6.

21. Seale, 2007, pp. 89 and 91, n. 1.

22. It is most probable that boughs were laid on the steps of the altars (Jebb, 1883, p. 11 on 2), and were generally supposed to be removed after the suppliants' plea had been answered positively, see e.g. Aesch., *Supp.* 506-507 and Eur., *Supp.* Supp. 32, 359-360 (cf. 258-262 for failure of supplication by leaving the boughs on the altars).

23. For the comparison between little children and nestlings, see Finglass, 2018, p. 172 on 14-17 and discussion in Haussker, 2020, pp. 208-209. For the link between the bird imaginary and rite of supplication as tragic clichéd device, see Wilkins, above, n. 5.

24. For the number of participants on stage and the possibility that children comprise the majority, see Seale, 2007, p. 92 n. 3. Finglass' suggestion that the priest is a single adult surrounded by children (2018, pp. 166-167 on 1-150) does not correlate with information in these verses; cf. Jebb, 1883, p. 15 on 18.

a relatively long time until they finally were allowed to leave safely and were offered by the Athenians the opportunity to settle and establish a new home at Naupactus.²⁵

The missing explicit documentation of children's ritual behavior in the examples above can be supplemented by dramatic representations authored by Euripides, who dramatised minors' *hiketēia* in five tragedies among nine of his surviving plays in which pre-pubescent children are included in the cast.²⁶ In three of the plays whose plots revolve around *hiketēia*, *Heraclidae*, *Supplices* and *Hercules furens*, the opening tableau is performed by minors, in the presence of other, adult, family members. I begin with an analysis of the first two, which are concerned with the Athenian *polis* and its attitude toward foreigners. Both plays represent supplication (performed at an altar, whether in a temple or before a political institution) as an institutionalized method of foreigners' application to the Athenian *demos*, a ritual which was already documented in the first half of the 5th cent. BCE,²⁷ and encompassed in the classical period various foreigners with diverse requests supplicating the Athenian people.²⁸ In *Supplices* the request is for help in recovering the bodies and securing burial for their dead, rather than seeking protection, while in *Heraclidae* the suppliants are seeking sanctuary and defense. In these two cases the foreigners' supplications succeed, and the choice to accede to the petitioners' request also perpetuates Athenian piety, *eusebeia* (εὐσέβεια) toward the gods, and compassion by defending the suffering foreigners and their children to the extent of endangering themselves in military conflict.²⁹

Strangers' *hiketēia* involving an intergenerational aspect received much attention in tragic discourse. In these scenes children appear as participants in the physical aspect of the ritual, but, where speech takes a central place, their presence is defined by silence support. In *Supplices* (produced in the late 420s BCE)³⁰ the main performers of supplication are the mothers of the seven Argive fallen commanders who technically

25. Thuc., I 101, 2 – 103, 3; Diod. Sic., XI 84, 8 and Paus., III 11, 8; IV 24, 7. For probability of living arrangements, see Sinn, 2005, p. 81.

26. *Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Andromache*, *Heraclidae*, *Hecuba*, *Supplices*, *Hercules furens*, *Troades* and *Iphigenia Aulidensis*.

27. Zelnick-Abramovitz, 1998, pp. 569-571; and see the comprehensive discussion in 562-569 for supplication as a common form of formal appeal to the Athenian *demos*, with ceremonial rules; for *hiketēia* as a customary official event in each *prytaneia* in 4th cent. BCE, see above, n. 12.

28. E.g. Ar., *Lys.* 1138-1141, *Dem.*, XXIV 12; L 5; Isoc., XIV 1, 51-52; Diod. Sic., XVII 108, 6-7; *IG II²* 218, 276, 336, 337, 502 (the repeated phrase in the decrees ἔδοξεν ἔννομα ἰκετεῦειν points to the propriety of a plea and argumentation, mainly in moral and legal aspects).

29. See e.g. Isoc., IV 58 and X 31. For Athenians' generosity toward foreigners linked to the city's imperial power and democratic ideology, see esp. Tzanetou, 2005 and 2011.

30. Collard, 1975, pp. 8-14; Toher, 2001, pp. 342-343; Morwood, 2007, pp. 26-30.

supplicate Demeter, but direct the request to Theseus through his mother Aethra who stands at the altar of Demeter at Eleusis. The chorus of the mothers surrounded her and presented their plea by approaching her knees (165) with a suppliant branch (10, 102) and using verbal expressions of *hiketeia* (42-44, 60, 63-64, 68, 130, 278-279, 284-285). The sons of the Seven, the Epigoni (Ἐπίγονοι), are located close to Argive leader Adrastus (106) who is lying on the ground near the entrance to the temple of Demeter and Kore, sharing in that way the supplication with the mothers of the fallen (20-25, 104).³¹ Children, who actually have very little role in the rite, are mentioned only once, without clarification of their exact posture, but it is clear that Theseus sees them as part of the whole suppliant group, “why they came to us with an outstretched suppliant hand” (τί γὰρ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἦλθον ἱκεσίαι χερί;108). The boys’ silence during the rite is sharply opposed to the voice that they raised while performing their pivotal role in the ritual lament over their dead fathers in the final antiphonal lament, *kommos*, toward the end of the play (1123-1164). The stage of entreaty and argumentation, which is distributed over many verses, is shared only among the mothers of the fallen commanders and Adrastus (113-130, 174-179 and *passim*).

Heraclidae (430 BCE) presents children as foreign fugitives (416-417) who request help from the *polis*’ authorities, seeking sanctuary at an altar (1-308). In the opening tableau, Iolaus and some of the male children of Hercules sit beside him as suppliants at the altar of Zeus Agoraios, which they adorned with begging branches (70, 123-125), against the backdrop of the Temple of Zeus in Marathon, while Alcmene and the girls are inside the sanctuary. Led by aged Iolaus and Alcmene, Hercules’ small children arrived at Marathon as suppliants (93-94) after failing to receive hospitality in every other Greek city (31-34, 318). Their supplication, addressing Zeus, is actually directed to the Athenian people (e.g. 33-34, 238-239), and is centered on seeking defense from Eurystheus, who pursued them and sent his messengers to threaten them with death. Thus, Eurystheus attempted to prevent the Heraclidae from taking revenge on him in the future because of the hardships he caused their father, Hercules (468-470, 1000-1004).³²

The play casts a group of children of unspecified number and age. It is attested clearly that all the children who are present in the sacred site, the boys on stage,

31. For total number of performers on stage in the opening scene, estimated between 23 and 32, see conclusive discussion in Rehm, 1988, pp. 274-275.

32. On the revenge of the sons for their fathers, see e.g. Hdt., IV 69, 3; Arist., *Rhet.* 1376a6 and 1395a16; Kassel, 1991, pp. 47-48; Haussker, 2020, pp. 221-222. For the perception that a child is not perceived as a being *per se* in the present, but as the adult that he will be in the future, cf. e.g. Arist., *Pol.* 1260a 31-33 and a comprehensive discussion in Griffiths, 2020, pp. 139-197.

and the girls, unseen, with their grandmother in the temple, need to be cared for by adults due to their tender age and the danger in which they find themselves. Attributes and gestures indicated in the text (e.g. σμικρούς 24, ὦ τέκνα τέκνα, δεῦρο, λαμβάνεσθ' ἑμῶν πέπλων· 48-49, κόρους νεοτρεφεῖς 92-93, νηπίους ἔτι 955) signify their minority, using, inter alia, the nestling metaphor (νεοσσῶν ... πανήγυριν 239).³³ The sense of the children's weakness is intensified by the fact that they are under the supervision of older people, themselves feeble (10-11, 955; cf. 602-604),³⁴ and by the threat of violation at the hand of their pursuer, an Argive herald, who attempts to lead them away from an altar (67-72; cf. 248-249).³⁵

While children are still the central actors of the political aspect, Iolaus is the central figure who conducts the ceremony's religious portions. Within the structure of the *hiketeia*, they have performed an appeal and used body language; they approached an altar, adorned it with suppliant boughs and performed ritual gestures, most probably under Iolaus' supervision. During the argumentative phase they remained silent. Iolaus, a good friend (and nephew) of Hercules who assumes protection of the children, manages the argumentation and plea (esp. 181-231). He makes an appeal in the name of the children after addressing his supplication directly to Demophon by grasping his knees and touching his chin (226-230), while the children remain at the altar. Iolaus' verbal request points to the children's inherited noble origin and kinship (205-212), to reciprocity (esp. 215-231), and to fairness. He also recounts the children's pathetic qualities of young age and paternal orphanhood: σμικρούς δὲ τοῦ σδε καὶ πατρὸς τητωμένους ("these [here] are young and deprived of their father" 24),³⁶ although it was not the children's weakness that occasioned the acceptance of the supplication, but rather Athenian openhandedness.

33. For rhetorical-poetic figures of bird imagery here and in Euripides, see Bond, 1981, p. 81 on 71-72.

34. For noticeable correlation between begging children and old people characterizing scenes of *hiketeia* in Euripides, see esp. Menu, 1992, p. 258. For children's tragic stereotype as vulnerable individuals, see Sifakis, 1979, pp. 68-69.

35. For violence against defenseless foreigners, *hiketai* as desecration, see e.g. Hes., *Op.* 327-334; Pl., *Leg.* 729e5-730a; cf. Hdt., III 48, 2-3 (discussed below). For the rarity of physical violence between the characters on tragic stage, see Allan, 2001b, 137 on 63-68.

36. This lack of a father's social and emotional protection for his prepubescent children is a frequent motif in the sources and noticeable in depiction of childhood experience, cf. e.g. Hom., *Il.* XXII 484-505 and XXIV 732-738; Eur., *Tro.* 752-753.

The theme of the Heraclidae's supplication to the Athenian people, memorializing the Athenians' generosity and the help extended to the children of Hercules,³⁷ was expressed in iconography, and probably also by other tragic poets in addition to Euripides.³⁸ Representations from the 5th and 4th cent. BCE have been found outside Athens, in Southern Italy, which presumably relate to Euripides' play, and primarily depict the opening scene. For example, an early Lucanian *pelike*, found at Policoro (ancient Heraclea), dated to the end of 5th cent. BCE, and attributed to the Carneia Painter, features a bearded adult man, wearing a luxurious garment, standing on a low altar, holding a suppliant's bough. He is accompanied at the altar by four prepubescent children wearing wreaths on their heads, who certainly can be identified as suppliants; two grasp his clothes and two others are holding boughs. There appears to be what might be an additional, fifth, boy, situated above the adult's right shoulder, at an observation point, who points to the approaching herald.³⁹

Euripides' *Hercules furens* (416 BCE), the last tragic example of the second category, takes place in Thebes and presents in the opening tableau a children's plea to the divine to spare their lives (1-338). The suppliant children, having taken refuge, sit at the altar of Zeus the Saviour in front of Hercules' palace in Thebes (46-48, 51-54). They perform the rite together with their mother, Megara, and grandfather, Amphitrion (115-117, 229-231), who functioned as the children's *kyrios* (κύριος, master and protector) (44-46) while Hercules' return home was uncertain.

The children are threatened with death by Lycus, the usurper tyrant of Thebes, who feared that they will avenge his murder of Creon (41-43, 168-169, 547), Megara's father. As in *Heraclidae*, the children are primarily seen in terms of potential heirs, and their future is what actually puts their lives in danger and is more dominant than their natural vulnerability.

37. Iolaus acknowledging Athens being "alone in the whole inhabited expanse of Greece" as the defender of children (*Heracl.* 304); and cf. above, n. 29.

38. E.g. Aeschylus' lost play *Heraclidae* (*TrGF* 3 F73b-77 with Wright, 2018, pp. 30-32). For the possible existence of another play titled *Heraclidae* by a dramatist perhaps named Pamphilus, or a drawing attributed to Pamphilus, a painter (or Apollodorus, identification unattested) in an unidentified Athenian *stoa* [schol. Ar., *Plu.* 385 Dübner], see discussion in Sommerstein, 2001, pp. 165-166 on 385.

39. Policoro, Museo Nazionale della Siritide inv. no. 35302. Cf. Allan, 2001a, pp. 74-76, fig. 6; Taplin, 2007, p. 127, no. 37 and 281, n. 44; 2012, pp. 231-232, fig. 11.2 (minor's age seems appropriate for the pre-puberty stage [cf. esp. Crelier, 2008, pp. 106-110 and Beaumont, 2012, p. 40]); see also the Lucanian column-krater, probably also related to Euripides' *Heraclidae*, ca. 400 BCE, close to the Policoro Painter, which depicts two children with Iolaus on the altar (Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen inv. no. 1969.6; *LIMC* IV "Herakleidae" 3; Allan, 2001a, pp. 76-78, fig. 7; Taplin, 2007, p. 129, no. 38).

Here again, the children are located with other societally weak members, women and elders. The choir also consists of elders of Thebes, who note their old age and weakness (107-110, 125-126 and *passim*). The children's youth and vulnerability are expressed by nestling imagery (νεοσσούς 72, νεοσσοίς 224; cf. 982),⁴⁰ by deprivation of a male parent (e.g. 74-77; cf. 490-496), and by their mother's and grandfather's failure to fulfill the protective familial role (e.g. 73-81 87, 326). They experience grave physical and emotional despair, having been deprived of nutrition, drink and shelter (52-53),⁴¹ finding themselves left without any help from friends (55-59), hoping only for the uncertain return of Hercules for their salvation (97). In addition they suffer from the childlike inability to correctly interpret the true situation, and expect their father to arrive every moment: "with childish confusion they interrogate me about their father" (τῷ νέῳ δ' ἐσφαλμένοι/ζητοῦσι τὸν τεκόντ'..., 75).

Referring again to the ritual structure, the children perform an approach to the altar and hold on to it. Their precise gesture used in clinging to the altar is not mentioned, unlike that of Amphytrion and Megara who are attested as sitting down at the altar (47-48).⁴² Like in *Heraclidae*, the children are in existential danger and adult protective figures who accompany them supervise the rite and complete its necessary elements. The plea provided by Amphytrion includes moral and practical elements accompanied by a threat (205-216),⁴³ referring also to children's innocence (206-207), a distinctive characteristic of children often cited in sources.⁴⁴ Since that supplication failed, there followed another request within the framework of the ritual. After Lycus threatened the children with the violation of burning them at the altar (240-246), Amphytrion and Megara plead with Lycus to allow them to prepare the children for burial, clothing them in funeral garments. The two adults make requests on behalf of the children, using the suppliant verb (320-322) and, ironically, Lycus grants *this* suppliant request. What saved them was Hercules' sudden arrival, which, ironically again, would lead to the children's death at the end of the play.

Herodotus' account of the Corcyrean boys (or youth) supplicating Artemis of Samos (Hdt., III 48, 2-4; cf. Plut., *Mor.* 859f-860c; Diog. Laert., I 95, 3-5), while not

40. For bird imagery in the play see Bond, 1981, p. 317 on 982; and cf. above, nn. 23 and 33.

41. For starvation as means to subdue suppliants, see Bato, *fr.* II 15-19 (= *FGrH* 268, F3, Ael., *fr.* 48, Suda pi.3122); and see below.

42. Although children are not mentioned as those who sit at the altar, it is clear that Amphytrion cares about all those who are with him at the altar, while children are actually the target of Lycus (Bond, 1981, pp. 73-74 on 47-48).

43. Cf. Pötscher, 1994-1995, p. 74 for the model of aggressive, demanding or threatening *hiketeia*.

44. E.g. Pl., *Symp.* 217e; discussed thoroughly in Golden, 2015, pp. 8-9.

connected to Athens, but which does refer to peer supplication, may by comparison illuminate the general limitations of minors within the framework of the ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece. When, in the beginning of the 6th cent. BCE, Periander, son of Cypselus, sent 300 Corcyrean boys, sons of the city's elite, to Alyattes of Sardis for castration, the Corinthians who were delivering the boys anchored in Samos. The Samians, once they learned of the boys' intended fate, instructed the youth to become suppliants in their sanctuary of Artemis and did not allow them to be dragged out of the temple. While the Corinthians, in response, attempted to starve the suppliants out, the Samians found an original way to sneak food into the sanctuary, thus preventing the children from starving; they declared a festival which lasted throughout the entire period of time that the boys were in the temple. During the feast, every night the dancers had to bring cakes of sesame and honey as offerings to the temple of the Goddess, thus providing nutrition for the boys. The case provides historical evidence both of enslaved children's collective supplication and that children were indeed candidates for violation against suppliants. The description of the ritual behavior is absent, but the case points sharply to adult initiative and conduct of the rite, here by the authorities of the city, who offer that which children could not initiate and execute due to their young age and socio-political status.

The final example of this type of *hiketeia* is the sole case of a sibling's supplication to a parent, which was performed on the Athenian stage. The infant Orestes supplicates on behalf of his sister Iphigenia in Euripides' *Iphigenia Aulidensis*. When her supplication to Agamemnon for her life fails, Iphigenia, in a final attempt to prevent being sacrificed, uses her infant brother Orestes to support her request (1241-1252):

ἀδελφέ, μικρὸς μὲν σύ γ' ἐπίκουρος φίλοις,
 ὅμως δὲ συνδάκρυσον, **ικέτευσον** πατρὸς
 τὴν σὴν ἀδελφὴν μὴ θανεῖν· αἴσθημά τοι
 κὰν **νηπίοις** γε τῶν κακῶν ἐγγίγνεται.
 ἰδοῦ, **σιωπῶν λίσσεται** σ' ὄδ', ὦ πάτερ.
 ἀλλ' αἶδεσαί με καὶ κατοίκτιρον †βιον†.
 ναί, πρὸς γενείου σ' ἀντόμεσθα δύο φίλω·
ὁ μὲν νεοσσός ἐστιν, ἡ δ' ἠϋξήμενη.

Brother, you are **small** and can give only slight aid to your dear ones,
 but weep together with me and **supplicate** our father
 that your sister will not die: for even **infants**
 have some perception of hardships.
 See, father, **he supplicates you although in silence**.
 So respect (our supplication) and take pity on my life.

We two, your blood kin, beg you by your chin,
one just a chick, the other a grown-up maiden.

Orestes, who is too young to speak, a point which in that short passage is attested three times (μικρὸς 1241, νήπιος 1244, νεοσσός 1248), is requested by his sister to join her crying and to perform a gesture of the rite by touching his father's chin/beard (1247), while his older sister, the main suppliant, provides the plea and the argumentation (1249-1252). Here we have a hint as to how little children who still lack the appropriate mental and cognitive development can have a share, even if but a small part, in the act of *hiketēia*, for they have a sense, *aisthēma* (αἴσθημα), of evil circumstances (1243-1244).

Baby Orestes is incorporated into another, different kind of supplication, as the suppliant Telephus' hostage, an incident which is documented in a few dozen pottery illustrations from the middle of the 5th cent. onward. Some of the scenes depict Orestes stretching his hands toward an adult figure (probably Agamemnon) from an altar while he is held captive by Telephus.⁴⁵ Interpreting it as a child's supplication for salvation may be inaccurate in the absence of supporting literary evidence, as it is important to note that it is a common gesture of infants to their parents and close adult figures.⁴⁶ In any case, in two different situations Orestes plays a supporting part in the *hiketēia* of the mature characters.

4. A CHILD AS A SINGLE OR PRIMARY SUPPLIANT

This type of supplication includes both a child's appeal to a parent or other threatening adult for mercy to spare his life, and to a corpse for protection. Such supplications are almost always personal and are directed to addressees with whom the child is acquainted from within the family circle. Like the previous type of *hiketēia*, the rite is performed in the presence of family members.

45. E.g. Attic red-figure calyx crater, ca. 400-375 BCE (Berlin, Antikensammlung Staatliche Museen inv. no. VI 3974); *LIMC* I "Agamemnon" 13 with Taplin, 2007, p. 206 no. 75. Cf. Themistocles' supplication to Admetus king of the Molossians, while approaching the hearth he was holding the king's only infant son in his hands (Thuc., I 136, 2 – 137, 1; cf. Plut., *Them.* XXIV 1-4; Nep., *Them.* VIII 4). For the interrelationship between the narrative of Themistocles' supplication and that of Telephus in Aeschylean and (later Euripidean) tragedy, including baby Orestes' iconographic representations, see Csapo, 1990. For supplication and hostage, see *ThesCRA* III "hikesia" I, E.

46. See Creleir, 2008, *passim*; cf. McNiven, 2007, p. 87.

The cases discussed below allow for a broader glimpse into the performance part of the ritual, and simultaneously reveal child-adult interaction in the ritual acquisition process in the actual moment as well as providing meagre evidence of child's argumentative performance, in the verbal part of the supplication. The main evidence come from tragedy, and occasionally from vase paintings.

I begin with Sophocles' *Ajax*, the first tragedy from among the extant plays to include a child character, and one of the two wherein Sophocles casts children.⁴⁷ The play presents a unique example of entreaty to a corpse for protection and a most detailed picture of a child's supplication, as well as demonstrating the acquisition of ritual skills. Eurysaces, son of Ajax and Tecmessa, the hero's captive concubine, is involved in difficulties surrounding his father's burial, following Menelaus' and Agamemnon's prohibition of the burial. Teucer, Ajax' bastard brother and Eurysaces' uncle, who now takes responsibility for the child's rearing and protection, does as Amphytrion in *Hercules furens* did, giving Eurysaces instructions for the rite, while attempting to secure a hasty burial for Ajax in a hostile environment (1183-1184). Eurysaces has to perform a leading role in guarding the corpse of his father although his tender age does not allow him to perceive the true circumstances (552-555). Thus, guided by Teucer's clear and accurate instructions,⁴⁸ the child holds onto the body of Ajax, and performs an *ex tempore hiketeia* (1171-1175):

ὦ παῖ, πρόσελθε δεῦρο, καὶ σταθεὶς πέλας
ικέτης ἔφασαι πατρός, ὅς σ' ἐγένετο.
 θάκει δὲ προστρόπαιος ἐν χερσὶν ἔχων
 κόμας ἐμὰς καὶ τῆσδε καὶ σαντοῦ τρίτου,
ικτήριον θησαυρόν. ...

Dear child, approach here and place yourself close,
 hold on your father as a **suppliant**, your father who begot you.
 Sit down as a defense seeker, holding hair both my own
 and hers and yours in your own hands,
 as a **suppliant treasure** ...

47. For preference of dating the composition to the fourth decade of 5th cent. BCE, see extensive discussion in Finglass, 2011, pp. 1-11.

48. See Stanford, 1963, p. 204 on 1171-1172.

The ritual instructions included kneeling or sitting down, holding the object of supplication and carrying strands of the hair of Ajax' close family members instead of the generally-used branches wrapped in wool.

After cursing the unburied dead against anyone who would try to drag Eurysaces from Ajax' body (1175-1179), Teucer finished his instructions (1180-1181):

ἔχ' αὐτόν, ὦ παῖ, καὶ φύλασσε, μηδέ σε
κινήσάτω τις, ἀλλὰ προσπεσῶν ἔχου,

hold on and keep it⁴⁹ and no one should move you [from the corpse], but
(if someone comes), throw yourself upon [the corpse]...

Eurysaces' extreme powerlessness to secure his father's corpse under dangerous conditions invites the protection of powerful authorities.⁵⁰ Thus the corpse which he is protecting (being backed by Ajax' sailors, Tecmessa his mother, and the curse against violation) functions in parallel as the sacred object of supplication protecting the suppliant against aggression.⁵¹

Like most of the suppliant children in dramatic representations, Eurysaces' appearance on stage is defined by silence and lack of initiative, but he functions as the main performer of the rite, while the adults who support him, Tecmessa and Ajax' sailors, are silent assistants and observers. His ritual performance is embodied in the fulfillment of the adult's instruction, and is comprised mainly of a movement of approach together with gestures and related ritual accessories, and ends with strict instruction of what to do in case of violation, as follows: approach (πρόσελθε δεῦρο), take a position (σταθεῖς), touch (ἔφαψαι), sit (θάκει), hold (ἔχων), keep (φύλασσε) and fall (προσπεσῶν ἔχου). This is the most detailed case in sources of teaching and directing a child in ritual performance. It happens in the face of a dire situation, and the acquisition of related religious knowledge is not conducted by observation and imitation, which was perceived as the natural and basic tool for learning (e.g. Pl., *Prt.*

49. I am more in agreement with Finglass (2011, p. 468), who takes πλόκον (1179) as the object of φύλασσε (1180) instead of Ajax' body as suggested by Henrichs (1993, pp. 166-167), who interprets the verb as signifying the supernatural power of the dead Ajax to protect the child, rather than to be defended by him; and see below, n. 51.

50. Some scholars' linkage of the scene with Ajax' hero-cult (among others, Burian, 1972 and Henrichs, 1993), is convincingly refuted by Currie (2012, pp. 335-336). For concluding discussion on the much discussed and debated issue of Ajax hero cult worship, see Finglass, 2011, pp. 46-51.

51. For mutual defense of the suppliant and the corpse, which is undisputable, see esp. Burian, 1972, pp. 152-154; cf. Eitrem, 1915, p. 415.

326a; *Leg.* 796c and 887d; Arist., *Poet.* 1448b6-8), but requires careful instructions. The necessity of immediately and urgently preparing a child to cope with the worst imaginable in human-divine or human-human interaction, and the inability to rely on gradually absorbed internalized ritual learning might explain the use of detailed instruction and close supervision, especially considering Eurysaces' tender age.

The child's supplication succeeds, though it does not include even a vestige of the speaking elements; this can perhaps be explained by the abnormality of the addressee and the complexity of the ritual context which incorporates several aspects of worship.⁵²

The next example is that of Molossus in Euripides' *Andromache* (produced around the mid-420s BCE),⁵³ one of only three tragic plays in which children have verbal parts on stage, and the only extant case of a child executing the spoken portion of the act of supplication before the audience.⁵⁴ The ceremony is performed after mother and child are destined to be executed according to Menelaus' and Helen's plot. Here too the child lacks paternal protection and he executes the rite following the failure of his parents to defend him; Andromache herself has been sentenced to death and Neoptolemus is absent. Molossus' weakness, fear and tender age are emphasized by Euripides' employment of the nestling metaphor (504-505), and will be expressed in Molossus' choice of wording. The initiative to plea is not the child's, but is rather a response to Andromache's guidance. In one last desperate attempt to save her son from death, Andromache urges Molossus to beg Menelaus by performing a ritual gesture of supplication, "approach to master's knees, child, supplicate him [for clemency]" (λίσσου γούνασι δεσπότη/χρίμπτων, ὦ τέκνον 529-30), after which the child left his mother's embrace and approached Menelaus. Here supplication includes an approach and the use of a distinctive gesture, in this case clasping the knees of the addressee, but these are not accompanied by ritual wording. The vocal element is very concise, in a simple form of concrete expression, without argumentation:

... ὦ φίλος / φίλος, ἄνευ θάνατόν μοι.

avert death from me, / dear one (530-531).

52. For this scene mixing three rites, death ritual, curse and supplication, see discussion in Brook, 2018, pp. 66-71.

53. Stevens, 1971, pp. 15-21; Allan, 2000, pp. 149-160.

54. Haussker, 2020, pp. 212-217.

This child's appeal on stage, a small boy approaching the knees of an ominous adult man in a position of power who intends to murder him, has a strong emotional impact on the audience, while the boy's use of the word φίλος ironically stresses both his innocence, and the common expectation of a positive response to minors' pleas, although eventually Molossus is brutally rejected by Menelaus (537-538).⁵⁵

Other examples are appeals of children to their fathers. In *Hercules furens* Hercules' son is rejected and killed by his insane father who imagines that he is killing Eurystheus' sons. The child, in horror and astonishment, tries an impromptu rite of supplication to his father, at first crouched adjacent to the altar "like a bird", and then approaching Hercules' knees trying to stretch his hand to touch his chin and neck (HF 974 and 984-989). That short supplication, which is not seen before the audience, but reported using direct speech, incorporates full completion of the components of the rite: an approach, a ritual gesture, plea and argumentation for being spared and refusal of the authority in power to the supplication:

... ὁ τλήμων γόνασι προσπεσὼν πατρὸς
καὶ πρὸς γένειον χεῖρα καὶ δέρην βαλῶν
ἽΩ φίλτατ', αὐδαῖ, μή μ' ἀποκτείνῃς, πάτερ·
σὸς εἰμι, σὸς παῖς· οὐ τὸν Εὐρυσθέως ὀλεῖς.

... the poor child, falling on his father's knees
and trying to touch his chin and neck, cried:
My dearest father, don't kill me
I'm yours, your own child, not Eurystheus' son you are killing now.

Argumentation was futile, for Hercules committed murder while temporarily insane, believing that he was murdering the children of his enemy, Eurystheus.

The child's wording, which consists of requests and arguments, is characterized by simple language, and is in effect merely an appeal not to be killed, in the absence of additional supplicatory vocabulary to accompany the gestures of the rite.

The scene of Hercules' son, supplication, attempting to reach his father's chin, is also depicted in a red-figure calyx crater dated to ca. 350-325 BCE.⁵⁶ The two scenes

55. Cf. *Med.* 862-864. The scene depicted in a Lucanian red-figure calyx-crater attributed (or closely related) to Policoro Painter, ca. 400 BCE, which shows Medea's two boys lying dead on the altar, may probably imply that an impromptu supplication rite was performed before she slayed them (Cleveland Museum of Art inv. no. 1991.1; Taplin, 2007, pp. 122-123, no. 35).

56. Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional inv. no. 11094 (L.369); *LIMC* IV "Herakles" 1684; Denoyelle and Iozzo, 2009, pp. 186-187, fig. 260.

are different; in the vase painting the child is an infant carried in the hands of his father, while in the play he is old enough to speak and provide short argumentation, and his gestures are more varied. A similar episode of a child supplicating a male parent is repeated in the presentation of Dryas' death at the hand of Lycurgus. Literary sources do not provide information about Dryas's supplication, but the scene appears on pottery from the 5th and 4th cent. BCE. The gestures are varied. A portrayal on a red-figured hydria attributed to the Nausicaa Painter and dated *ca.* 460-440 BCE presents Dryas' supplication, performed while sitting on the altar and stretching his hands toward his father who is swinging an axe.⁵⁷ In another Attic red-figure hydria, dated to 425-400 BCE, Dryas is shown kneeling;⁵⁸ on an Apulian krater from the 4th cent., *ca.* 350s BCE, attributed to the Painter of Boston, which may be based on a scene of Aeschylus's *Edoni* (*TrGF* 3 F57-67), Dryas is seen kneeling and grasping the knees of his father while the latter is holding an axe.⁵⁹ Dryas' exact age, while he looks adolescent, is difficult to ascertain and his minority is implied mainly by his lack of beard in contrast to his father.⁶⁰

In conclusion to the present chapter, I would like to note that the so-called "argumentative performance" of minors occurs but twice in sources. These two children alone speak during the act of supplication, and so emphasize the silence of children in most of the other cases referred. Unlike in mourning, for example, where even young children, such as Alcestis' son, can perform a ritual lament employing all needed ritualistic (and artistic) elements (Eur., *Alc.* 393-493, 406-415; cf. *Supplices* above), in the verbal part of the ritual, in supplication rather, their wording is very concise and lacks the same complexity and rhetorical skill which can be witnessed in adults, and as such does not afford them even a slim chance to escape the rejection of the addressee.

4. CONCLUSION

The rite of supplication, appropriate in response to life-threatening dangers or equivalent threatening situations, was most probably not a routine sacral practice of Athenian citizen children in the classical period. While it is impossible to estimate how many children witnessed the sight of their fathers in figurative supplication in courts, performing

57. Krakow, Czartoryski Museum inv. no. 1225; CVA 14 pl.12 a-b; *LIMC* VI "Lykourgos I" 26.

58. Rome, Villa Giulia = ARV² 1343a = *LIMC* VI "Lykourgos I" 12.

59. Ruvo, Museo Jatta 36955 [n.i. 32]; *LIMC* VI "Lykourgos I", 14; Taplin, 2007, pp. 68-70, no. 12.

60. See specifically Beaumont, 2012, pp. 40-42.

proper rituals at altars with family and communal members was most probably a rare phenomenon. As such *hiketeia* cannot be comparable in a strict sense to other religious activities involving children, except in the wide age range of minor participants and the rite's strong connection with family ties. For it is the inherited status of children and their generational relationships which were actually the factor that occasioned the dire circumstances which lead to the necessity of performing the *hiketeia*.

However, while routine ritual activity primarily expresses success in the socialization process, a minor's performance of supplication is strongly characterized by weakness and incompetence as far as ritual requirements being properly executed. *Prima facie*, the strength of children as suppliants was meant to lie precisely in their weakness, thus strengthening their appeal. Regardless, as the examples presented herein illustrate, children's inherent fragility did not enable them to promote the success of the plea; in the argumentations which adults present on their behalf, children's vulnerability is one of the accompanying parameters for gaining mercy, though not the central one. The supplications that were accepted did not succeed because of the children's weakness, and those which failed, failed despite their weakness. Hence, since the chance for a successful outcome of the rite was dependent more on the rite's proper management and rhetoric, the role of the adults, who chiefly initiated, supervised and managed the act, as well as spoke and employed appropriate tools of persuasion while appealing to the addressee, was crucial.

The pivotal question is, why do the sources present most of the children, and not only the very young ones, as almost totally silent, limiting them to non-verbal communication with the authorities in power? The answer lies in their marginal social and legal status as well as their mental and cognitive inferiority, which prevent them from employing rational judgement and proper discernment, as often asserted in sources regarding the characteristics of the stage of childhood.⁶¹ According to Athenian contemporary perception, minors' cognitive, social, as well as moral and emotional, incompleteness deprived children of the ability to understand and assess the circumstances in which they were involved, in addition to their natural childlike psychological passivity and physical and spiritual weakness.⁶²

To conclude, the virtual exclusion of children from the spoken and argumentative aspect of *hiketeia* prevented them from performing that ritual in its entirety. Their partial participation, and the helplessness in which they are mired when the rite takes place, resulted in increasing the inherent asymmetry that exists between the

61. E.g. Soph., *Ant.* 735; Arist., *Pol.* 1260a11-14. Cf. Francis, 2006, pp. 50-52; Golden, 2015, pp. 4-6.

62. E.g. Hom., *Il.* II 289-290; Aesch., *Ag.* 71 and 81; Soph., *Phil.* 700. Cf. Francis, 2006, pp. 53-54.

petitioner and the addressee. Hence, supplication as a mechanism of acquiring and performing religious knowledge regarding the specific relationships between one's self and powerful authorities in dire situations operated less as a tool for children's socialization, rather it highlighted, if inadvertently, children's socio-political and legal marginality as weak members of the community.

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