

Human Transgression – Divine Retribution

A study of religious transgressions and
punishments in Greek cultic regulation and
Lydian-Phrygian propitiatory inscriptions
(‘confession inscriptions’)

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ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Summertown Pavilion

18-24 Middle Way

Summertown

Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-78969-525-0

ISBN 978-1-78969-526-7 (e-Pdf)

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Abbreviations

This list only includes abbreviations referring to publications of inscriptions. As far as possible, abbreviations of periodicals follow the standard of *L'année philologique*.

BIWK	<i>Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens</i> (= Petzl 1994).
CIG	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> (= Boeckh 1828-1877)
IC	<i>Inscriptiones Creticae</i> (= Guarducci 1950).
I.Delos	<i>Inscriptions de Délos</i> (= Roussel & Launey 1937).
I.Ephesos	<i>Die Inschriften von Ephesos</i> (= Wankel 1979).
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> .
I.Heraclea Pontica	<i>The Inscriptions of Heraclea Pontica</i> (= Jonnes 1994).
I.Lindos	<i>Lindos - Fouilles et recherches 1902-1914 II, Inscriptions</i> . (= Blinkenberg 1941).
I.Rhod.Per.	<i>Die Inschriften der rhodischen Peraia</i> (= Blümel 1991).
I.Smyrna	<i>Die Inschriften von Smyrna</i> (= Petzl 1987).
I.Tralleis	<i>Die Inschriften von Tralleis und Nysa</i> (= Poljakov 1989).
IvP II	<i>Die Inschriften von Pergamon, vol. 2</i> (= Fränkel 1895).
LGS	<i>Leges Graecorum Sacrae</i> (= von Protz and Ziehen 1896 and 1906).
LSCG	<i>Lois Sacrées des Cités Grecques</i> (= Sokolowski 1969).
LSAM	<i>Lois Sacrées de l'Asie Mineure</i> (= Sokolowski 1955).
LSS	<i>Lois Sacrées des Cités Grecques, supplément</i> (= Sokolowski 1962).
MAMA	<i>Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiquae</i> .
NGSL	<i>New Greek Sacred Laws</i> (= Lupu 2005).
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> .
SGDI	<i>Sammlung de griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften</i> (= Collitz and Bechtel 1905).
Syll.	<i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> .
TAM	<i>Tituli Asiae Minoris</i> .

Foreword

This book is a revised version of my doctorate dissertation submitted to the University of Bergen in 2006.¹ As the dissertation was a continuation of my master's thesis, submitted in 2000,² the propitiatory inscriptions have followed me for a very long time, and accordingly there are many persons who deserve acknowledgements for help and support during my work on the thesis and subsequently this book. First, I would like to thank my tutor, the late Professor of Classics at the University of Bergen Tomas Hägg (1938-2011) who sadly passed away before this revised version of my thesis was completed. His advices, kindness and humanity are still deeply missed. Second, I am immensely indebted to the assistance and guidance of my co-tutor Professor of the history of religion at the University of Bergen, Ingvild Sælid Gilhus. I am also grateful to former Assisting Professor of Classics at the University of Bergen and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Stavanger, Tor Hauken, who first introduced me to the world of epigraphy in general and the propitiatory inscriptions in particular.

I would also like to thank The Faculty of Arts at The University of Bergen for granting me a scholarship and a position as research fellow from 2002 to 2006. I am also grateful for scholarly support from the participants of PROAK research program at Institute for Classics, Russian and Religion initiated by Professor Einar Thomassen. During the work on the thesis and its revision I visited Oxford University on several occasions. From March 1st to June 1st, 2005 I was fortunate to obtain status as academic visitor at Corpus Christi College through the kind assistance of Professor Stephen J. Harrison. During my stay in Oxford, Professor Robert Parker gave me fruitful comments upon my views for which I am highly grateful. Professor Parker also accepted the invitation to serve as first opponent at my doctorate defence in 2006. I would also like to thank Dr Richard Gordon who visited Bergen in June 2005 where he read and commented on large parts of my study, and Professor Jens Braarvig, University of Oslo, who served as second opponent at my doctorate defence. And of course, I cannot ignore my former fellow doctorate students at Institute of Classics, Russian and Religion, University of Bergen, who were of great value both scholarly and socially. Nobody mentioned, nobody forgotten.

The revision of this dissertation has been made possible by financial and scholarly support I have received from the Institute for Historical Studies at Norwegian University of Technology and Science (NTNU), Trondheim. Especially I would like to thank Professor of Classics Thea Selliaas Thorsen who urged me to start the process of revising my thesis, Professor of Classics Staffan Wahlgren who has corrected many of my translations of inscriptions and given me several suggestions for alterations, and research fellow Robert

¹ Rostad 2006a.

² Rostad 2000.

Emil Berge who kindly assisted me in converting the Greek script of my original thesis into Unicode. All my other colleagues at the institute also deserve my gratitude.

Last, I would also like to thank my parents, my sister Maja, my brother-in-law Rune, my niece Nora Louise and my nephew Jakob Leonard.

Trondheim, January 2020

Part 1

Introduction and Aims of the Study

Chapter 1

Introduction

The propitiatory inscriptions or ‘confession inscriptions’ as they are usually called are a distinctive epigraphical genre only found in certain parts of the Lydian and Phrygian landscapes of ancient Asia Minor. The inscriptions dating between 57/8 and 263/4 AD record stories of people who have committed various transgression, mainly violations of cultic rules, and therefore are punished by an enraged deity who usually inflicts disease upon or kills the transgressors. To settle the conflict and obtain healing, the perpetrator or his relatives must propitiate the deity. The inscriptions are, in my opinion, intended as a public proof that the conflict between human and deity has been settled.

This genre has challenged scholars for nearly a century following Franz S. Steinleitner’s famous thesis on confession and religious justice published in 1913. Since then the distinctiveness and peculiarity of these texts have been emphasised and they have been viewed as detached from other forms of ancient religiosity, especially traditional Greek religion. Instead, they have been interpreted as expressions of Oriental beliefs and notions – based on the claim that the inscriptions record the confessions of sinners, a practice unknown to ancient Greek religion – but often without specifying what the terms ‘Oriental’ or ‘Greek’ imply. I wish to challenge this distinction. There can be no doubt that these inscriptions represent a form of religious expression and practice not found anywhere else than in certain parts of Asia Minor for a limited period of history (ca. AD 80-260). But the fact that the texts are formulated in an unusual way does not prove that the beliefs and notions they express are completely alien to the ancient religious landscape and do not overlap with religious practices we find in cults which usually fall under the traditional category ‘Greek religion’. After all, few if any religious and cultural expressions can be understood in isolation from a wider context of beliefs and rituals.¹ In this study it is argued that these inscriptions can be understood as part of a general ancient religiosity, even though they admittedly are distinctive in their form and limited in their geographical and temporal distribution.

Since my thesis was submitted in 2006 new propitiatory inscription and scholarly articles have been published. These are not included in this revised version, apart from a brief survey in Ch. 4.² I for my part conclude my research on the propitiatory inscriptions here.

¹ Cf. Chaniotis 2009: 142-148 for a discussion of the propitiatory inscriptions’ place in Greco-Roman religiosity.

² Cf. p. 52.