

## CALLIMACHUS AND THE ETRUSCANS: HUMAN SACRIFICE BETWEEN MYTH, HISTORY, AND HISTORIOGRAPHY\*

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*Abstract:* This paper assesses the historicity of a fragment of Callimachus which attests a human sacrifice by the Etruscans after a victory over the people of Lipari. It argues that the story is best seen as an example of the Greek tendency to represent the Etruscans as savage, and contextualises this tendency particularly within the attempts of the Deionomenid tyrants to represent themselves as defenders of Greek civilisation against such barbarian savagery. Finally, it speculates on the ultimate literary or historiographical source of the story.

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It is well recognised that the amount of reliable information about the Etruscans and their history is painfully exiguous. What is sometimes less considered is the fact that Etruscan culture knew the production of literary texts, and there are good reasons to believe that among these texts some form of historiography was present.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, however, not a single line of this Etruscan historiographical production has survived. For this reason we are completely reliant on Greek and Roman sources for our reconstruction of Etruscan history. Our main sources, of course, are the Augustans, the Roman historian Livy and the Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, whose narratives largely inform us about the frequent wars between the Etruscan cities and Rome, but other ancient historians have preserved important scraps of knowledge on several aspects of Etruscan culture, religion and history. Furthermore, a significant amount of information (whether genuine or not) can also be gathered from non-

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<sup>1</sup> We may recall the *Tuscae Historiae* cited by Varro in *Cens. DN* 17.6, or the *Tusci auctores* whom the emperor Claudius referred to in his famous speech preserved on a bronze tablet from Lyons (*ILS* 212; cf. *Tac. Ann.* 11.24). Cornell (1976) remains a valuable overview.

historiographical sources, including poetical works.<sup>2</sup> It is nowadays generally recognised that even historical sources such as Livy must be read carefully and that in our particular field we should always bear in mind the fact that the authors were embedded in cultures of which the Etruscans had frequently been fierce enemies. This reminder is even more urgent when we are dealing with non-historical sources such as poetry. In the latter case, the reasons for distortions from the basic historical facts and even literal inventions of facts may be numerous, and even more subtle than those we encounter in the historical accounts. It is to one of those examples that the present paper is devoted.

### 1. The Texts

Our starting point is a very poorly preserved fragment of Callimachus' *Aetia*. This famous elegiac poem in four books is known mainly from quotations by later authors and through several papyri.<sup>3</sup> One of these fragments, assigned already by the first editor, Pfeiffer, to Book 4, is rather unclear as to its subject.<sup>4</sup> Some more specificity can be gained from the relevant *διήγησις*, one of the 'explanations' discovered in the 1930s, which contains the arguments of the poems and other information on them;<sup>5</sup> in this particular *διήγησις*, even though it is not very well preserved, the words 'Etruscans' and 'Lipara' can be read. These references to Etruscans and to the small island of Lipara, about 20 km off the coast of Sicily, led Pfeiffer to the conjecture that the topic of the text was the same as that of a distich of Ovid's poem *Ibis* (465–6),<sup>6</sup> for which Callimachus was one of the sources.<sup>7</sup> The Ovidian distich runs as follows:

<sup>2</sup> We need only recall the role of Vergil's *Aeneid*, which is often considered as a kind of handbook of pre-Roman Italy, though this approach can often prove misleading: see Di Fazio (2008).

<sup>3</sup> The literature on Callimachus increases at an incredible pace. For recent overviews see Montanari and Lehnus (2002); Acosta Hughes, Lehnus, and Stephens (2011). On the *Aetia* see recently Harder (2010); Massimilla (2010); and especially Harder (2012a) and (2012b).

<sup>4</sup> F 93 Pfeiffer = 196 Massimilla = 93 Harder. See the English translations in Nisetich (2001) 156 and Harder (2012a) 272. For the most recent treatment of the text see Massimilla (2011).

<sup>5</sup> Pfeiffer (1934) 99; Harder (2012a) 272.

<sup>6</sup> The conjecture was later confirmed by another papyrus which preserved the initial words of the Callimachean lines, where it seems that Phoebus, the Tyrrhenians and Lipara are mentioned: Massimilla (2010) 430. This conjecture had in fact been already suggested by Zipfel (1910) 32.

*victima vel Phoebō sacras macteris ad aras,  
quam tulit a saevo Theudotus hoste necem*<sup>8</sup>

Or be sacrificed as a victim to Apollo at the sacred altars  
as in the death that Theudotus suffered from a savage enemy.

The connection between the distich and the Callimachean fragment is, of course, not evident from the text; it becomes clear thanks to some *scholia* on Ovid's text. According to one of these *scholia*:

Tyrrheni obsidentes Liparium castrum promiserunt Apollini, si faceret eos victores, fortissimum Liparensium ei sacrificare. Habita autem victoria promissum reddiderunt, immolantes ei quendam Theodotum.<sup>9</sup>

The Etruscans, besieging the Liparian camp, promised Apollo, if he made them victors, to sacrifice to him the bravest of the Liparensians. And when they had gained the victory, they fulfilled their promise, sacrificing to him a certain Theudotus.

To sum up so far, the combination of fragments and *scholia* gives us an intriguing story: while the Etruscans were besieging Lipara, they decided to vow a human victim to Apollo. The story has indeed already been investigated by several scholars. Giovanni Colonna proposed a possible historical context for the episode.<sup>10</sup> He called into play a short passage from Tzetzes' *Chiliades* (8.882–8),<sup>11</sup> which characterises the Etruscans as violent (*βίαιοι*) and excessively brutal (*θηριώδεις*), as they still sacrificed human victims down to the time of Hieron; this Hieron is presumably to be identified as the 5th-century tyrant of Syracuse. According to Colonna, followed by some other

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<sup>7</sup> Acosta-Hughes (2009).

<sup>8</sup> La Penna (1957) 118–9.

<sup>9</sup> La Penna (1959) 124–5; Nisetich (2001) 155; see also Guarino Ortega (1999) 340–1. It has been long recognised that most of the *scholia* to Ovid's *Ibis* are absolutely worthless, as they frequently offer incorrect explanations and quote several forged Latin verses: see Cameron (2004) 180–3. The same *scholion* we are dealing with, for instance, quotes a *distichon* of Cornelius Gallus which is not recognised by scholars: Nicastrì (1984). Nevertheless, this does not entail that all the information given in these *scholia* must be rejected, and in fact it has proved possible to recognise a tiny number of genuine citations: Cameron (2004) 181–2.

<sup>10</sup> Colonna (1984); (1989); (2002).

<sup>11</sup> Leone (1968) 338.

scholars,<sup>12</sup> this passage should refer to the same episode as the one mentioned in Callimachus' text. We do know as a matter of fact that during the 6th and 5th centuries BC the Etruscans and Greeks were rivals for the control of lower Tyrrhenian Sea,<sup>13</sup> in which context the Lipari Islands constituted an extremely important point of control, a kind of 'hinge' for the Strait of Messina.<sup>14</sup> The foundation of a Cnidian colony on Lipari in the first decades of the 6th century seems to have led to a change in the assets and equilibrium of the area. This situation, from the Etruscan perspective, was getting worse after their big defeat in Cumae in 524, a defeat which closed to them the commercial routes towards Campania.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the decades between 524 and the beginning of the 5th century Lipara acquired even more importance for southern Etruscan cities. According to Diodorus, after their settlement in Lipara the Cnidians had to organise their defence from the Etruscans: 'they defeated the Tyrrhenians in many sea-battles, and from their booty they often made notable dedications of a tenth part, which they sent to Delphi'.<sup>16</sup> This last detail seems to find confirmation in Pausanias' description of Delphi, when he says: 'The people of Lipara too dedicated statues to commemorate a naval victory over the Etruscans'.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, there are two huge dedications made by the Lipareans in Delphi, dating to the first half of the 5th century, which celebrate their victories over the Etruscans.<sup>18</sup>

Given this historical framework, the episode of a siege made by Etruscans in Lipara acquires some general credibility. But it has been considered

<sup>12</sup> See, among others, Gras (1985) 519–22; Ampolo (1987) 63–4; D'Agostino and Cerchiai (1998) 120. I myself return to this passage at p. 60 below.

<sup>13</sup> See below for further details.

<sup>14</sup> Gras (2002) 11–13. For an overview of the sources on Lipara, see Bernabò Brea and Cavalier (1991); Pagliara (1995).

<sup>15</sup> Rota (1973) 152; for the general picture see Cerchiai (1995) 150 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Diod. 5.9.4–5 (Oldfather, tr.).

<sup>17</sup> Paus. 10.11.3 (Jones, tr.).

<sup>18</sup> Rota (1973); Colonna (1984) 562–3; see also Vatin (1991) 235–59 and Vatin (1993), whose readings have often raised doubts among scholars: e.g. Pallottino (1985) 7–14 and Cristofani (1987) 76. I am not discussing the complex question regarding another Delphic dedication, the inscribed *anathema*, dated between the end of the 6th and the beginnings of the 5th century, in which the terms *Apollon* and *Tyrrhanoi* appear. Colonna suggests that it should be read as a dedication made by Etruscans to the Delphic Apollo as a thanks for a victory: the offering could have been made in the same context of these battles between Etruscans and Lipareans. The proposal is suggestive, but it has been contested by several scholars: Pallottino (1985); Cristofani (1987); Briquel (1998) 163 ff.; D'Agostino (2000). See also Colonna's response (1989).

a historical event in all its aspects, and consequently it is often quoted in several accounts on Etruscan history, and even more in studies on their religion, as one of the main proofs that they practised human sacrifice.<sup>19</sup> This, however, is where our problems arise.

## 2. The Problems

We should emphasise, first of all, that the practice of human sacrifice in Etruscan culture is anything but certain, especially when we consider that sacrifice is a ritual activity, and as such it should have some distinctive features, such as recurrence and regularity.<sup>20</sup> I cannot review this topic at length here, so I limit myself to pointing out that we have no sure testimony that Etruscans enacted this kind of ritual.<sup>21</sup> It is true that archaeological excavations in Italy in the last decades have rather frequently discovered apparently anomalous burials placed in inhabited areas. This phenomenon seems to contradict the well-known prohibition recorded in the Twelve Tables.<sup>22</sup> However, the considerable frequency of these burials itself indicates that the prohibition was not so rigidly enforced, and that there were often exceptions; this implies that we cannot interpret the burials as evidence of human sacrifices, as some scholars believe. As far as iconographical testimonies are concerned, they too are ambiguous, conveying only a certain general popularity of the myth of human sacrifice in Etruscan art (just as in Greek art also),<sup>23</sup> but not its historical grounding.<sup>24</sup> As to literary sources, they can easily be integrated into the context of the well-known Greek and Roman tendency to give a particularly negative picture of the Etruscans, as has been emphasised at the beginning of this paper. Several studies<sup>25</sup> have emphasised this phenomenon, underlining the two most common motifs used by Greek and Roman writers in their depictions of the Etruscans: on the one side, their *τροφή*, that is softness, voluptuousness,<sup>26</sup> and, on the other side, their

<sup>19</sup> See for example Steuernagel (1998) 150–2; Haack (2006) 241–2; Donati in *ThesCRA* 1.137 n. 9.

<sup>20</sup> From the huge literature on the meaning of ritual I refer mainly to Bell (1997).

<sup>21</sup> For an extensive treatment of the topic see Di Fazio (2001).

<sup>22</sup> See Bartoloni and Benedettini (2007–8).

<sup>23</sup> See Bonnechère (1994).

<sup>24</sup> As Brelich put it, ‘it is arbitrary to deduce the frequency—in any epoch—of a practice from the quantity of the related myths’: Brelich (1969) 196.

<sup>25</sup> Musti (1989) above all.

<sup>26</sup> For the concept see the collection of sources in Liébert (2006).

cruelty and lack of piety, often connected with the practice of piracy.<sup>27</sup> In this perspective, the charge of human sacrifice was one of the most powerful accusations that could be used to cast a bad light on an enemy people. We will return to this theme below.

It is now worth underlining some aspects of Callimachus' account that arouse active suspicions. First of all, the name of the sacrificed man: Theudotus, 'given to the god', is clearly a speaking name.<sup>28</sup> It is known in the onomastic of Lipara, but only in a few cases, and not earlier than the end of the 4th century.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the definition of Theudotus as 'the bravest of the Liparensians' finds several correspondences in analogous circumstances in which a human victim is chosen.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, we know other anecdotes connected with the fights between Etruscans and Liparensians. According to Pausanias (10.16.7), during one of these clashes, the Pythia suggested that the Liparensians oppose the Etruscan fleet not with all their ships but only with five of them: the outcome was the victory for the Greeks. The story, as has been well recognised, recalls that of the fight between the Horatii and the Curiatii,<sup>31</sup> and seems quite clearly to belong to the mythical realm. Even in this case, as Mazzarino put it, 'l'a-temporale esemplare e paradigmatico si mescolò con la precisa notazione storica'.<sup>32</sup>

At this point, it is worth wondering if we are really entitled to read Callimachus' testimony as a historical source, or rather, as we have suggested at the beginning of this paper, we need to adopt a more comprehensive and intertextual reading of the story. From the picture we have presented, it seems to emerge that the historicity of the episode of human sacrifice is not to be taken for granted: rather, everything suggests that it would have been invented. Our task now is to try to understand what interest might have been served in inventing such an episode. In order to clarify this point, it is worth

<sup>27</sup> On Etruscan piracy see Cristofani (1983); Giuffida Ientile (1983); Gras (1985); Briquel (1997).

<sup>28</sup> Bonnechère (2000) 257.

<sup>29</sup> Fraser and Matthews (1997) 202 and 208.

<sup>30</sup> 'The strongest of the Tyrrhenians' in those same years is killed in an athletic fight by a Greek champion, Telemachos, at Delphi: Thuillier (1985). The Carthaginians in 307 killed the *κάλλιστοι* among the prisoners after their victory over Agathocles (Diod. 20.65.1); Ribichini (2010) 130–1. M. Curtius acted his *devotio* as *civis fortissimus* (Proclius *ap. Varr. De ll.* 5.148.3). See Colonna (1984) 572–3 and Ribichini (2010) 131–3 for other similar occurrences.

<sup>31</sup> Colonna (1984) 563; Gras (1985) 517.

<sup>32</sup> Mazzarino (1965) 262. See also the critical remarks of Bonnechère (2000) 257 on Callimachus' and Ovid's scholia.

taking a step backward to consider the geopolitical situation of the lower Tyrrhenian Sea between the 6th and 5th centuries.

### 3. A 'Hot' Sea

'Nei primi anni del V secolo il Tirreno meridionale era divenuto un mare decisamente caldo'.<sup>33</sup> As we have already emphasised, at that historical epoch Lipari had acquired strong relevance. The southern Etruscan cities had been cut off from traditional areas of commerce such as Campania. The Greek presence in what had been their sea ('Tyrrhenian' from *Τυρρηνοί*)<sup>34</sup> was becoming even more pervasive. Raids against Greek cities were very frequent: according to Strabo (6.1.5) in the first decades of the fifth century Anaxilaos, the tyrant of Rhegion, decided to fortify Scylla in order to defend the isthmus against Etruscan piracy.<sup>35</sup> The Carthaginians were of course another important player in this geographical context. In Herodotus' account, when the ambassadors of the Hellenic League came to the tyrant of Syracuse, Gelon, asking for his help against the Persians, he noted that the Greeks had earlier refused to support Gelon in the fight against the Carthaginians to set free the *emporía* which were left in their hands.<sup>36</sup> Lipara must have been one of these *emporía*.<sup>37</sup> Notwithstanding the huge modern debate over this story,<sup>38</sup> it seems clear that in those years there was intense unrest in the area, mainly for reasons connected with traffic and commerce. Just a few years earlier, Dionysius the Phocaeen, according to Herodotus (6.17), conducted piracy against both Etruscans and Carthaginians, using the Aeolian Islands as his base.<sup>39</sup>

From the beginnings of the 5th century, a new protagonist neatly emerges in the area: the Deinomenids, tyrants of Syracuse,<sup>40</sup> 'incarnazione estrema ... del fenomeno storico della tirannide arcaica'.<sup>41</sup> Their careful and

<sup>33</sup> Luraghi (1994) 351. For an overall account see, among others, Colonna (2003); Ampolo (1987); Gras (2002); Bonanno (2010) 162 ff.

<sup>34</sup> A 'Tyrrhenian bay' is already referred to in Sophocles' *Triptolemus* (fr. 598 Radt = Dion. Hal. 1.12.2), staged after 468 BC.

<sup>35</sup> Briquel (1990) 180; Sammartano (1996) 54.

<sup>36</sup> Hdt. 7.158.2. See Ampolo (1993) 63; Luraghi (1994) 278 ff.; Harrell (2006).

<sup>37</sup> Colonna (1984) 562.

<sup>38</sup> Lo Cascio (1973–1974); Mafodda (1992); Bravo (1993).

<sup>39</sup> See Ampolo (1987) 48; Vaglio (2000).

<sup>40</sup> Luraghi (1994) 273 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Catenacci (1996) 95.

shrewd use of ideological propaganda has been emphasised by several scholars.<sup>42</sup> It has been noticed that Gelon was inspired by the model of the ‘best king’, capable of defending his homeland in wars, pious, and upright.<sup>43</sup> In this picture, an important role was played by Gelon’s victory in 480 against the Carthaginians at Himera,<sup>44</sup> a victory which was emphatically described by contemporary sources as the Western counterpart to the Athenian victory over the Persians at Salamis, the emphasis even extending to the claim that the two battles occurred on the very same day.<sup>45</sup> Gelon celebrated his victory by sending a statue of Zeus and three linen cuirasses to the Treasury of the Carthaginians in Olympia<sup>46</sup> and a golden tripod to Delphi,<sup>47</sup> and by using part of the booty to build a temple for Demeter and Kore.<sup>48</sup>

The same model was followed by Gelon’s brother and successor, Hieron.<sup>49</sup> For him too there is an epoch-making battle, the one fought in the waters of Cumae in 474/3 BC against the other great enemy, the Etruscans (Diod. 11.51).<sup>50</sup> His victory was celebrated in poetry. In his first *Pythian* (to

<sup>42</sup> Privitera (1981); Luraghi (1994) 354 ff. In using the term ‘propaganda’ I am aware of the debate on the use of this concept for the ancient world: see, for example, Hornblower, *OCD*<sup>4</sup> 1220. But see the self-aware use of this word for the analysis of the Deinomenids’ religious politics in Privitera (1981), Mafodda (1996), Bonanno (2010) 168 ff., and more generally Catenacci (1996) 32–3 and 238–9. Propaganda (in some sense of the term) was very important for the Deinomenids, for two reasons especially: because their power was fundamentally illegitimate, and because they had to face the problem of giving cultural and religious cohesion to a social community which was not fundamentally coherent: Luraghi (1994) 368 ff.

<sup>43</sup> Privitera (1981) 405 ff.; see recently Harrell (2006) 125 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Zahrnt (1993); Mafodda (1996).

<sup>45</sup> Hdt. 7.166; Diod. 11.23.1 (who speaks of Plataea). See Braccisi (1998); Feeney (2007) 44; Harrell (2006) with previous references.

<sup>46</sup> Paus. 6.19.7; Luraghi (1994) 314; Harrell (2006) 129: ‘The treasury suggests that the victory over a barbarian force has relevance to Greeks in general’. See Catenacci (1996) 229–30 for the importance of dedications at Olympia and Delphi in the elaboration of the tyrants’ propaganda.

<sup>47</sup> Diod. 11.26.7; Privitera (2003); Harrell (2006) 125 ff. The Deinomenids had a special relationship with Delphi: Catenacci (1996) 96.

<sup>48</sup> Diod. 11.25.1, 26.7; Luraghi (1994) 314 with other references. The Deinomenids were proudly hierophants of Demeter and Kore: see Catenacci (1996) 133 for the ideological meanings of this office.

<sup>49</sup> See recently Bonanno (2010).

<sup>50</sup> Bonanno (2010) 159 ff. For a possible equation between this battle and Salamis, which would explain the different tradition related by Diodorus 11.23.1 (see n. 45): Braccisi (1998) 53–4.



which we shall return),<sup>51</sup> Pindar ‘aligns Hieron’s victory over the Etruscans at Cumae with the battle of Himera by expressing the hope that both local barbarian enemies (Phoenician/Carthaginian and Etruscan) will not dare to rise again’.<sup>52</sup> In this case too, Hieron recorded his victory with the offering of some bronze inscribed helmets in the sanctuary of Olympia,<sup>53</sup> and he added his name to the huge monument placed at Delphi by his brother Gelon, as recalled in emphatic tones by the poet Bacchylides of Ceos (3.15 ff.).<sup>54</sup> Even in this case there is careful attention to propaganda: for Hieron assembled literary figures such as Bacchylides, Pindar, and Aeschylus, whose *Persae* was produced at Syracuse, in order to emphasise the importance of the fight against the barbarians.<sup>55</sup> But it is important to point out that ‘l’immagine dell’*optimus rex* era quella di Gelone: Ierone tentò in parte di adeguarvisi, ma soprattutto indusse i poeti a propagandarla come fosse la sua.’<sup>56</sup>

In these years too we can perceive in Greek culture the beginning of a conscious ‘ethnic’ hostility towards the barbarians, especially the Etruscans, and especially in the Sicilian context. It has been noticed, for example, that the equation between the very word *Tuppavoi* and *τύραννοι*, which belongs to the anti-Etruscan propaganda, makes sense with the Doric form of the name, thus again recalling the Siceliote context.<sup>57</sup> It is likely that the information collected by Palaephatos (*De incred.* 20), according to which the mythical terrible Scylla was none other than the ships of Etruscan pirates, came from the same context.<sup>58</sup> More generally, it has been emphasised that the image of Etruscans as pirates was emphasised by Siceliote historiography from the beginning of the 5th century.<sup>59</sup> This ideological operation ‘poteva essere realizzata tramite procedimenti analogici, mitici o storici’.<sup>60</sup> Among the mythical treatments, the singular tale recorded by Servius Danielis (*ad Aen.* 1.52) about Liparus and his cruel brother Tyrrhenus deserves attention.

<sup>51</sup> See recently Pfeijffer (2005) 25.

<sup>52</sup> Harrell (2006) 131.

<sup>53</sup> *SEG* 9.1206; 23.253; 33.328: ‘Gelon, son of Deinomenes, the Syracusan, made the dedication to Apollo’. See Cristofani (1983) 82; Bonanno (2010) 172–3.

<sup>54</sup> Gentili (1953); Gras (1985) 690; Privitera (2003) 416; Bonanno (2010) 173 ff.

<sup>55</sup> Luraghi (1994) 363; Braccesi (1998) 54–5, with references.

<sup>56</sup> Privitera (1981) 409.

<sup>57</sup> Colonna (1984) 560.

<sup>58</sup> Stern (1996) 50–1; Santoni (2000) 76–7. Scylla was also considered daughter of a Tyrrhenus (scholiast on Plat. *Rep.* 588c).

<sup>59</sup> Giuffrida Ientile (1983) 50 ff.

<sup>60</sup> Privitera (1981) 401. See Sammartano (1996).

In this tale, Liparus is the first victim of the cruelty of the Etruscan. Tyrhenus, as Colonna put it, ‘possiede una forte connotazione negativa, che ne fa a tutti gli effetti l’ipostasi del pirata-talassocrate etrusco’.<sup>61</sup> Thus a story about a human sacrifice made by Etruscans could have been one of the historical themes for propaganda, in order to shed a bad light on these dangerous enemies. This is a crucial point which deserves closer scrutiny.

#### 4. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

In the first decades of the 5th century we find a precise perception of Etruscans and Carthaginians as the main enemies of Sicilian Greekness: Pindar’s words are absolutely clear and especially significant as he was a direct witness of Hieron’s rise to power. In the first *Pythian*, ‘vero e proprio incunabolo dell’ideologia del potere tirannico di Ierone’,<sup>62</sup> he wrote: ‘I beseech you, son of Kronos, grant that the war cry | of the Phoenicians [i.e. the Carthaginians] and Etruscans may remain quietly | at home’.<sup>63</sup> The ideological use of the Carthaginian and Etruscan threat is even clearer when we consider that after the battle they were in fact no longer a real menace for Syracuse.<sup>64</sup> Both these peoples were commonly represented as cruel and ferocious, and especially as sacrificers of humans. For the Carthaginians, this *topos* is well-known in Greek and Roman sources, and seems to have been emphasised from the 5th century.<sup>65</sup> As for the Etruscans, the Greek world already knew them as impious sacrificers and cruel barbarians since the Mar Sardo battle (ca. 540 BC), in which they were allied with the Carthaginians. On that occasion, the inhabitants of Caere were said to have stoned to death the Phocaeen prisoners; the alleged consequence of this crime was an epidemic, for which they asked for advice from Delphi.<sup>66</sup> The Etruscans were already perceived as dangerous enemies even earlier: according to Ephorus Tyrrhenian piracy was a menace for the first Greek settlers in Naxos.<sup>67</sup> This perception

<sup>61</sup> Colonna (2000) 266. This tale, according to Colonna, might go back to the 5th century historian Hippys of Rhegium (*FGrHist* 554— if he existed: below, n. 85), who wrote about Sicily and Magna Graecia.

<sup>62</sup> Luraghi (1994) 358. For interesting remarks on the role of *epinicia* in the construction of history and memory see recently Grethlein (2010) 19–46; see also n. 80 below.

<sup>63</sup> *Pyth.* 1.72–4 (Race, tr.) For a commentary see Gentili (1995); see also Prag (2010) 55.

<sup>64</sup> Luraghi (1994) 363.

<sup>65</sup> See recently Ribichini (2010) and Prag (2010) with previous literature.

<sup>66</sup> Hdt. 1.167; on this debated, but basically unhistorical, episode see Di Fazio (2001) 439–45.

<sup>67</sup> Ephorus *FGrHist* 70 F 137 = Strab. 6.2.2. See Cusumano (1994) 70–3.

of Etruscans and Carthaginians as cruel and barbaric peoples seems to correspond somehow to a kind of ‘Orientalism’ *ante litteram*,<sup>68</sup> because cruelty is among the features that appear to be typical of the stereotypical portrait of the Oriental. We may also recall the tradition known to Herodotus (1.94), according to which the Etruscans came to Italy from Lydia.<sup>69</sup>

We have already underlined the fact that human sacrifice is one of the most serious charges to be levelled against an enemy, since it is the subversion of the fundamental religious act, that of animal sacrifice. In Greek eyes, this custom is extremely barbaric. Greek culture of the 5th century has a certain familiarity with this theme: several tragedies had the sacrifice of a human victim at the core of their plot.<sup>70</sup> This religious ritual is one of the tools through which Greek culture elaborated a self-definition in opposition to others; it ‘represented an extreme of human cruelty’<sup>71</sup> and was denounced as ‘barbaric’. It was regularly rejected in two dimensions: in time and in space; in time, because it was considered by the Greeks as an ancestral custom<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> In using this term I obviously refer to Edward Saïd’s influential and controversial book *Orientalism*; from the huge debate on this book, see the critical remarks of Casadio (2004); within the *Histos* context see also Lenfant (2012).

<sup>69</sup> According to an interesting hypothesis of Braccesi (1998), this tale could have been created in the same context of Hieron’s propaganda. It is interesting to note that Lydia and Cilicia are also the areas from which Typhon came. This offers an interesting perspective on Pindar’s way of working in parallel on historical and mythological levels. The same first *Pythian* in fact celebrates Hieron as carrier of peace and harmony, achieved against foreign aggression: in this role, he is equated to Zeus who was able to defeat the forces of disorder represented by Typhon, who is consequently connected to the Etruscans and Carthaginians: Cingano in Gentili (1995) 13–15; Braccesi (1998) 57–60; Harrell (2002); Pfeijffer (2005) 39–40. Pindar seems to have been the first to place Typhon’s burial in Western Greece, between Cumae and the coasts of Sicily (*Pyth.* 1.18): Cingano in Gentili (1995) 14. See the very lucid passage of Strabo (5.4.9), who quotes Pindar’s verses and connects Typhon’s presence in the area between Cuma and the Aeolian Islands with the volcanic activity. Pindar’s readers and audience of course surely knew that Cumae was the place in which Hieron had defeated the Etruscans, and that on the coasts of Sicily lay Himera, where he had taken part in the battle under the leadership of his brother. Furthermore, they would probably also have remembered the connections between Typhon and human sacrifice, suggested for example in a passage of Diodorus (1.88.4–6) in which Typhon is somehow related to Busiris (and so again connected to Herakles). The myth in which Herakles stops Busiris’ human sacrifices was well known already in the 5th century, for instance in a work of Panyassis. See Hall (1989) 148 n. 148.

<sup>70</sup> Burkert (1966); Hughes (1991); Bonnechère (1994); O’Byrhim (2000).

<sup>71</sup> Hall (1989) 147; see in general 146–9.

<sup>72</sup> Indeed, a custom of the times in which Greece itself was inhabited by barbaric peoples, according to Hecataeus of Miletus (*FGtHist* 1 F 119 = Str. 7.7.1). See Asheri (1997) 20.

that was no longer current; in space, since they believed that barbaric peoples still performed this ritual.<sup>73</sup>

When in myth the Greek hero brings culture to the barbarians, human sacrifice is particularly to be stopped. There is indeed ‘un vero e proprio dovere morale, una sorta di esigenza etica che dà, alle guerre dei Greci contro i barbari omicidi, un modo di alone mistico e fa di esse una specie di anticipazione di tutte le future crociate combattute in nome della religione.’<sup>74</sup> The model for this function was the cultural hero *par excellence*, Herakles.<sup>75</sup> It is superfluous to recall the connections between this hero and the figure of the Greek tyrant,<sup>76</sup> but in context it is worth underlining the particularly strong connections with the Deinomenids.<sup>77</sup>

It is thus interesting to invoke a small but significant group of sources, which may be particularly crucial for our investigation. According to these sources, Gelon, after defeating the Carthaginians at Himera, ordered them to desist from the barbaric practice of human sacrifice. The main source is a quotation of Theophrastus, from an otherwise unknown book titled *On the Etruscans*, and preserved in a *scholion* to Pindar’s *Pythians* (2.2).<sup>78</sup> This kind of

<sup>73</sup> Bonnechère (1994) 237 ff.

<sup>74</sup> Martelli (1982) 250.

<sup>75</sup> Joudain-Annequin (1989) 504 ff.; Burkert (1992).

<sup>76</sup> Beginning with the conscious use of his myth by Peisistratos: Boardman (1972); see also Privitera (1981) for interesting parallels between Peisistratos’ and the Deinomenids’ politics.

<sup>77</sup> The Deinomenids accorded great importance to their allegedly being descendants of Herakles: Giangiulio (1983) 827 ff. and now Giangiulio (2010) 115–30. It is also interesting to note in context the clear connections between Herakles, Syracuse and its tyrants, and the Lipari islands. Near Cyane’s spring in Syracuse, Herakles instituted the cults of Demeter and Kore (Diod. 4.23; 5.4), goddesses who were held in great esteem by the Deinomenids: Giangiulio (1983) 826–7; id. (2010) 125. We have already recalled that a temple for these divinities was erected by Gelon out of the spoils from the battle of Himera (p. 55 above). But Cyane was also the mythical name of King Liparus’ daughter (Diod. 5.7.5–7): Sammartano (1997). Under the sign of Herakles, in the first *Pythian* (1.62 ff.), Pindar placed the foundation of the city of Aetna by Hieron: for the ideological meaning of the foundation of Aetna see van Compernelle (1989); Catenacci (1996) 226. This brings us back again to the careful elaboration of the Deinomenids’ image, through the interplay of the mythical and historical elements. The mythical patterning seems to provide the Deinomenids with an adequate mythical background for their role as carriers of culture.

<sup>78</sup> ‘At least Theophrastus in his (work) *On Etruscans* says that on Gelon’s order they stopped performing human sacrifice’: Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 435 n. 586; see Prag (2010) 57. Pindar’s *scholia* are usually considered rather unreliable (Lefkowitz (1985)); but, as with the ‘explanations’ of Callimachus’ *Aetia*, this of course does not imply that *all* the information must be unreliable. The other source is Plut. *Mor.* 175A: ‘Gelon, the despot, after vanquishing the Carthaginians off Himera, forced them, when he made peace with

behaviour is a *topos* in ancient literature,<sup>79</sup> and belongs to the image of the good ruler which we discussed above.

If we recall the strong parallelisms between the two brother tyrants, it is interesting to speculate whether a similar role can be attributed also to Hieron. In order to find an answer to that question we can return to Tzetzes' quotation at the beginning of the paper (p. 50: the reference to Hieron's times as a moment in which Etruscans still performed human sacrifices may be not merely a generic indication, but rather a suggestion of the role played by this particular tyrant in stopping the barbarian custom; or more precisely of the role that Hieron, in his attempt to emulate his brother, decided to play before his contemporaries, through a careful use of the dominant media of his time: poetry and theatre.<sup>80</sup>

### 5. An Exercise in *Quellenforschung*

To sum up so far, I am proposing that the story of the human sacrifice made by the Etruscans during the siege of Lipari was an invention to be seen against the perspective of Hieron's desire to insert himself into a pattern elaborated by/for his brother Gelon. As Gelon had been celebrated for an epoch-making victory in a kind of 'holy war' against the barbaric Carthaginians, and for having compelled them to stop performing human sacrifices, so Hieron could be remembered for an important victory against the Etruscans, and also for having played the same role of 'civiliser' towards them. The choice of Lipara as the setting of this episode can be well explained by the crucial role played by that Aeolian island in the context of the fights between Greeks and Etruscan for the control of the lower Tyrrhenian sea: from a Syracusan perspective Lipara was the ideal theatre for a story revealing the barbaric customs of the Etruscans.

It is now time at last to return to Callimachus, and to ask where he could have read the story of Theudotus. The whole question of his sources is highly debated and we are generally not in a position to formulate a clear proposal regarding them. We may note that Callimachus' strong interest in

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them, to include in the treaty an agreement to stop sacrificing their children to Cronus' (Babbitt, tr.); similarly, *Mor.* 552A.

<sup>79</sup> See Just. 19.1.10, where Darius summons the Carthaginians. In Porph. *Abst.* 2.56.4, Iphicrates does the same with the Carthaginians of Libya and Hadrian with other unspecified peoples.

<sup>80</sup> See the considerations of Luraghi (1994) 366 on the use made by Gelon and Hieron of *epinicia* and theatre as instruments in order to build their image. See also Catenacci (1996) 230–33; Bonanno (2010) 186 ff. and 199 ff.; see also n. 62 above.

the West is clear even from other parts of his poems.<sup>81</sup> We might of course wonder if Pindar, who was one of the authors who influenced Callimachus,<sup>82</sup> or his competitor Bacchylides (part of whose work is lost), could have invented this story, using the already well-known cultural element of human sacrifice in order to celebrate Hieron's deeds; but it seems ultimately unlikely that this story was an absolute invention of the poets of Hieron's court.

We must rather emphasise the fact that Callimachus, working in Alexandria, could have had at his disposal a great variety of sources, which are mostly lost to us; in these sources he could have found that knowledge, which is fixed as a central theme of the poem.<sup>83</sup> It is commonly pointed out that one of Callimachus' sources on Italian history is likely to have been Timaeus of Tauromenion, but other historiographers of earlier times can also reasonably be called into play.<sup>84</sup> We may recall the name of Hippys of Rhegium, who is considered to be the first Western Greek historiographer.<sup>85</sup> He has sometimes been considered to be behind the propaganda activity by which the Chalcidian cities of Magna Graecia (above all Rhegium) tried to create a connection with the Aeolian Islands precisely in the first half of the 5th century:<sup>86</sup> another example of an invented tradition between myth and history which is an interesting parallel for our story. But we must emphasise also the possible role of other important historians, Antiochos<sup>87</sup> and Philistos:<sup>88</sup> both from Syracuse, both authors of a history of Sicily from the mythi-

<sup>81</sup> See Harder (2010) 96; (2012b) 299–359, 1010. In the same *Aetia* there is a catalogue of foundations of Sicilian cities (43 Pfeiffer = 50 Massimilla), in which of course also Hieron was recorded (v. 38); and there is an important fragment (106 Pfeiffer = 209–10 Massimilla) that calls into play a Gaius Romanus: Massimilla (2010) 457–60; see also Colonna (2000); Braccresi (2001).

<sup>82</sup> See Negri (2004) 13–15. For a recent effort to see Pindar not only as a poet but also as a historical source of information, useful in order to fill some gaps of Thucydides' work, see Hornblower (2004).

<sup>83</sup> Hutchinson (2003).

<sup>84</sup> See Fabian (1992) 171 ff.; Massimilla (1996) 324 ff.

<sup>85</sup> If of course he is not a mere *Schwindelauthor*: see Vattuone (2007) 189–90, with previous references.

<sup>86</sup> Sammartano (1997).

<sup>87</sup> *FGrHist* 555; Luraghi (2002); Cuscunà (2003); Vattuone (2007) 191–3. His influence on Thucydides is widely recognised: Mazzarino (1965) 227 ff. See recently Hornblower (2008) 272 ff., with previous references.

<sup>88</sup> *FGrHist* 556; Vattuone (2007) 194–6; Schorn (2010).

cal king Kokalos until their own times,<sup>89</sup> and both philo-tyrannical, even if with different nuances.<sup>90</sup> Antiochus deserves particular attention. He referred to the Lipari islands in a fragment quoted by Pausanias (10.11.3). In the same text, Pausanias speaks of the dedication of statues by the people of Lipara at Delphi to commemorate a naval victory over the Etruscans. Even if it does not seem possible to decide absolutely whether this information was also in Antiochus, he could well have dealt with this theme. According to Sammartano, Antiochus, in contrast to the just mentioned philo-Chalcidian propaganda, credited Lipara with a key role in the fight against the Etruscans.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, in a recent overview, Vattuone suggests an interesting connection between Antiochus, the Deinomenids, and Pindar. Antiochus would have played a significant part in the elaboration of the Western tradition on the role of Gelon at the time of Xerxes' invasion of Greece: this tradition (which Herodotus confines to the margins of his account) would go back to the portrayal of Gelon 'as a philhellenic leader promoted by Pindar and by the Deinomenid court of Hiero'.<sup>92</sup> The political context thus becomes somewhat clearer.

## 6. Conclusion

We cannot conclusively demonstrate that Pindar, Bacchylides, or Antiochos invented a story of human sacrifice for reasons of political propaganda. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that in the Sicily of the 5th-century BC there could have been very good reasons for such an invention. Not surprisingly, this story was no longer current in the following centuries, maybe because of its precise connection with a poetic and celebratory occasion, or maybe because of a lack of interest, as 4th-century Etruscans were no longer a threat for the Greeks. The overall negative image of Hieron after his death<sup>93</sup> could also have played a role.

<sup>89</sup> Antiochos' life is almost entirely unknown, but his activity should be confined to the 5th century; Philistos belongs to a generation later: he was born in 432 and died in 357/6 BC.

<sup>90</sup> Antiochos: Ronconi (1996); Philistos: Vanotti (1994).

<sup>91</sup> Sammartano (1996) 56.

<sup>92</sup> Vattuone (2007) 191.

<sup>93</sup> Bonanno (2010) 231 ff.

But the story was later recovered by an enthusiastic Hellenistic poet with a strong bent towards strange stories. What I hope to have shown in this paper is that behind those few and unclear lines there is not plausibly a fragment of history, but rather an ingenious piece of poetical invention. Ingenious, but not ultimately successful, as we have needed to expend so much effort in order to try to clarify its real purpose.

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