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Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, 181-234: A Deliberately Twisted Oath-Ritual

1) Hom. *Hymn. Aphr.* 25-8

..., ὤμοσε δὲ μέγαν ὄρκον, ὃ δὴ τετελεσμένος ἐστίν, ἀψαμένη κεφαλῆς πατρὸς Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο, παρθένος ἔσσεσθαι πάντ' ἡματα δῖα θεάων.

“..., she swore a great oath, which has been fully observed, while she was touching the head of the aegis-bearing Zeus: she, the bright one among the goddesses, would be a virgin for all her days”

(my own transl.)

2) Demosth. LIX.78

ἀγιστεύω καὶ εἰμι καθαρὰ καὶ ἀγνή ἀπό τε τῶν ἄλλων τῶν οὐ καθαρευόντων καὶ ἀπ' ἀνδρῶς
συνουσίας

“I am holy, pure, untouched by the impure and by contact with man”

(my own transl.)

3) Ar. Lys.207-11

ΜΥΡ. ἔατε πρώτην μ', ὧ γυναῖκες, ὁμύναι

ΚΑΛ. Μὰ τὴν Ἀφροδίτην οὐκ, ἐάν γε μὴ λάχῃς;

ΛΥΣ. Λάζυσθε πᾶσαι τῆς κύλικος, ὧ Λαμπιτοῖ· λεγέτω δ' ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν μί' ἅπερ ἂν κἀγὼ λέγω· ὑμεῖς
δ' ἐπομεῖσθε ταῦτα κάμπεδώσετε.

MYR. Ladies, let me swear first.

KAL. No, by Aphrodite, unless you have been chosen by lot.

LYS. You all, Lampitò, grab the cup. Let one of you, on behalf of you, say what I say; then, you all
will swear and confirm this.

(my own transl.)

4) **Oath of Cyrene** (text printed from Faraone 1993)

ἐπὶ τούτοις ὄρκια ἐποιήσαντο οἳ τε αὐτεῖ μένοτες καὶ οἱ πλέοντες οἰκίζοντες καὶ ἄρα ἐποιήσαντο τὸς ταῦτα παρβεῶντες καὶ μὴ ἐμμένοντας ἢ τῶν ἐλ Λιβύαι οἰκεόντων ἢ τῶν αὐτεῖ μενόντων. κηρίνος πλάσσαντες κολοσὸς κατέκαιον ἐπαρεώμενοι πάντες συνενθόντες καὶ ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες καὶ παῖδες καὶ παῖδισκαι

“The oaths were sworn by both those who would remain there and the sailors who would found the colony, and a curse was uttered against the oath-breakers and against those who would not believe in it, either Libya’s inhabitants or colons. After molding a little wax statue, they burnt it, while all of them, women, boys and girls, after gathering, uttered curses”

(my own transl.)

5) **IG II² 3453**

[πατρὸς Λυσιμάχη] Δρακο[ντίδ]ο ἦν [τὸ γέν]οσ μέν,|[ὄγδῶκοντ' ὀκτῶ δ' ἐ]ξεπέρα[σ]εν ἔτη·|[σύμπανθ' ἐξήκον]τα δ' ἔτη [κ]αὶ τέσσαρ[α] Ἀθηνᾶι [λατρεύσασα γενη τ]έσσαρ' ἐπεῖδε τέκνων. |[Λυσιμάχη--]έος Φλυέως μήτηρ. [Δημήτριος ἐπό]ησεν

“The progeny of Lysimache’s father descends from Dracon and lived to be eighty years-old: for sixty-four years in all she has served Athena’s cult, and gave birth to four sons. Lysimache’s mother was from Flia. Demetrius procreated her.”

(my own transl.)

6) **IG I³ 1330= CEG 93**

Καλλιμάχο θυγ-/ατρὸς τηλαυγέ-|ς μνημα, ἢ πρώτη Νίκης ἀμφεπόλ-|ευσε νεών· εὐλο-/γίαι δ' ὄνομ' ἐσχ-|ε συνέμπορον, ὡ-ς ἀπὸ θείας Μυρ-|ρίνη ἐ>κλήθη συ-|ντυχίας ἐτύμω-|ς. πρώτε Ἀθηναί-|ας Νίκης ἔδος ἀ-|μφεπόλευσεν ἐ-|κ πάντων κλήρω-|ι, Μυρρίνη εὐτυ-|χίαι.

“This is the grave of the splendid daughter of Callimachus, who was the first to run the temple of Athena Nike. Her name had fame as a companion as she was called Myrrhine, by divine lot. Myrrhine was the first to run the temple of Athena Nike, and was chosen, among all, after a lucky draw.”

(my own transl.)

7) Hom. II.III.292-301

Ἦ, καὶ ἀπὸ στομάχους ἀρνῶν τάμε νηλεῖ χαλκῶ· καὶ τοὺς μὲν κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὸς ἀσπαίροντας, θυμοῦ δευομένους· ἀπὸ γὰρ μένος εἴλετο χαλκός. οἶνον δ' ἐκ κρητῆρος ἀφυσσόμενοι δεπάεσσιν ἔκχεον, ἠδ' εὐχοντο θεοῖς αἰειγενέτησιν. ὧδε δέ τις εἶπεσκεν Ἀχαιῶν τε Τρώων τε· “Ζεῦ κύδιστε μέγιστε, καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι, ὀππότεροι πρότεροι ὑπὲρ ὄρκια πημήνεια, ὧδέ σφ' ἐγκέφαλος χαμάδις ῥέει ὡς ὄδε οἶνος, αὐτῶν καὶ τεκέων, ἄλογοι δ' ἄλλοισι δαμεῖεν”

“He said, and with the pitiless bronze cut the lambs’ throats: he laid them gasping on the ground, wanting for life. The bronze, indeed, took the force from them. From a bowl they poured wine using goblets, and then prayed the gods who live forever. And one of the Achaeans and one of the Trojans said: ‘Zeus renown and great to the highest degree, and the other immortal gods, who o the two [*scil.* ‘Paris and Menelaus’] shall be the first to work harm in transgression of the oath, may their brain, theirs and their children’s, run to the ground as this wine. And may their wives be made subject to others.’”

(my own transl.)

8) Ar. Lys.185

καί μοι δότω τὰ τόμιά τις

“Let someone give me also the sacrificial spoils”

(my own transl.)

9) Demosth.XXIII.68

..., εἴτ' οὐδὲ τὸν τυχόντα τιν' ὄρκον τοῦτον ποιήσει, ἀλλ' ὄν οὐδεὶς ὄμνυσιν ὑπὲρ οὐδενὸς ἄλλου, στας ἐπὶ τῶν τομίων κάπρου καὶ κριοῦ καὶ ταύρου, καὶ τούτων ἐσφαγμένων ὑφ' ὧν δεῖ καὶ ἐν αἷς ἡμέραις καθήκει, ὥστε καὶ ἐκ τοῦ χρόνου καὶ ἐκ τῶν μεταχειριζομένων ἅπαν, ὅσον ἔσθ' ὅσιον, πεπρᾶχθαι.

“..., and then he will not treat this as an ordinary oath, but as one that no man utters for any other purpose, while he stays over the slaughtered carcass of a wild boar, ram, and a bull, and has the animals' throats cut up by those who are responsible for that, and in the proper days, so that what is holy has been performed (and by those who are appointed to implement that task).

(my own transl.)

10) Ar. Lys.186-90

ΚΑΛ. Λυσιστράτη, τίν' ὄρκον ὀρκώσεις ποθ' ἡμᾶς;

ΛΥΣ. ὄντινα; εἰς ἀσπίδ', ὥσπερ, φασίν, Αἰσχύλος ποτέ, μηλοσφαγούσας.

ΚΑΛ. μὴ σύ γ', ὦ Λυσιστράτη, εἰς ἀσπίδ' ὁμόσης μηδὲν εἰρήνης πέρι.

KAL. Lysistrata, what oath will you take for us?

LYS. What oath? The one over the shield, as people say Aeschylus took one while sacrificing a sheep.

KAL. No, Lysistrata, you will not swear over a shield, not even for the sake of peace!

(my own transl.)

11) Synopsis of passages centering upon oaths taken over a shield

Aesch.Sept. 42-8	Xenoph.Anab.II.2.8-9	Oath of Plataea (text from Rhodes-Osborne 2003, n. 88)
<p>ἄνδρες γὰρ ἔπτα, θούριοι λοχαγέται, ταυροσφαγοῦντες εἰς μελάνδετον σάκος καὶ θιγγάνοντες χερσὶ ταυρείου φόνου Ἄρη τ' Ἐνυὸ καὶ φιλαίματον Φόβον ὠρκωμότησαν, ἧ πόλει κατασκαφὰς θέντες λαπάξιν ἄστυ Καδμείων βία, ἧ γῆν θανόντες τήνδε φυράσειν φόνῳ·</p> <p>“While sacrificing a bull over a black-rimmed shield and touching the bull’s blood with their own hands, seven warriors, forceful commanders, swore upon Ares, Enyo and Fear the blood-lover, that they would either cause destruction to the city and plunder the Cadmean citadel by force or they would die and soften this land with their blood”</p> <p>(my own transl.)</p>	<p>καὶ ὄμοσαν οἱ τε Ἕλληνες καὶ ὁ Ἄριαϊος καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ οἱ κράτιστοι μήτε προδώσειν ἀλλήλους σύμμαχοί τε ἔσεσθαι· οἱ δὲ βάρβαροι προσώμοσαν καὶ ἠγήσεσθαι ἀδόλως. ταῦτα δὲ ὄμοσαν, σφάξαντες ταῦρον καὶ λύκον καὶ κάπρον καὶ κριὸν εἰς ἀσπίδα, οἱ μὲν Ἕλληνες βάπτοντες ξίφος, οἱ δὲ βάρβαροι λόγχην</p> <p>“The Greeks, on the one hand, and Aræus and the most powerful among his followers, on the other, swore that they would not betray each other and would be allies. The Barbarians also swore that they would lead the march guilelessly. The swore this and sacrificed a bull, a wolf, a wild-boar and a ram over a shield, with the Greeks</p>	<p>ταῦτα ὄμοσαντες καταλύσαντες τὰ σφάγια ταῖς ἀσπίσιν...ὕπὸ σάλπιγγ<ο>ς ἀρὰν ἐποίησαντο, εἴ τι τῶν ὁμομομένων παραβαίνομεν καὶ μὴ ἐμπεδορκοῖ<ε>ν τὰ ἐν τῷ ὄρκῳ γεγραμμένα, αὐτοῖς ἄγος εἶναι τοῖς ὄμοσασι</p> <p>“They swore this and covered the carcasses with their own shield...to the sound of a trumpet they formulated the curse: had they violated any clause of the oath and had they failed to firmly adhere to what was written in the oath, they would have become impure to those themselves who had taken the oath”</p> <p>(my own transl.)</p>

	dipping a sword and the Barbarians dipping a spear” (my own transl.)	
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12) Ar. Lys.195-7

θεῖσαι μέλαιναν κύλικα μεγάλην ὑπίαν, μηλοσφαγοῦσαι Θάσιον οἴνου σταμνίον ὁμόσωμεν εἰς τὴν κύλικα μὴ ἴπιχεῖν ὕδωρ.

“After laying a great black, hollow cup and cutting the throat of a jar of Thasian wine, let us swear on the cup that we will never pour water into it”

(my own transl.)

13) Ar. Lys.181-2

ΛΥΣ. τί δῆτα ταῦτ’ οὐχ ὡς τάχιστα, Λαμπιτοῖ, ξυνωμόσαμεν, ὅπως ἂν ἀρρήκτως ἔχη;

LYS. Lampitò, why don’t we make an oath all together as soon as possible, so that it may become unbreakable?

(my own transl.)

14) Ar. Lys.205

εὐχρῶν γε θαῖμα κάποπτίζει καλῶς

“The blood has a beautiful color and gushes well”

15) Hom. II.II.337-41

“ὦ πόποι, ἦ δὴ παισὶν ἐοικότεες ἀγοράασθε νηπιάχοις, οἷς οὐ τι μέλει πολεμῆια ἔργα. πῆ δὴ συνθεσῖαι τε καὶ ὄρκια βήσεται ἡμῖν; ἐν πυρὶ δὴ βουλαί τε γενοῖατο μήδεά τ’ ἀνδρῶν, σπονδαί τ’ ἄκριτοι καὶ δεξιαί, ἧς ἐπέπιθμεν”

“Ah! You really speak as silly kids, who do not mind war actions. Where shall our covenants and our oaths go to? Burn in the fire our decisions, the men’s griefs, the unmixed treaties and right hands we believed in”

(my own transl.)

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