



Poine;: A study in ancient Greek blood-vengeance,

Hubert Joseph Treston

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Excerpt from Poine: A Study in Ancient Greek Blood-Vengeance

A second mode of vengeance we may describe as a personal restricted vendetta. It is distinguished from the mode which we have just mentioned by the absence of collective or hereditary punishment. It refuses to visit the sins of the father upon his children or upon his neighbours. The right to avenge remains with the relatives of the slain. They may lie in wait for the slayer or, if he ees, they may dog his foot steps overland and sea. But they dare not strike the innocent for the guilty. There is some power, whether of military autocracy, or of public opinion, which prescribes the bounds of their avenging. The system does not generally include a regular tribunal for the trial of homicide, whether because there is little difficulty, in certain social groups, in determining the identity of the murderer: or because some primitive method of evidence, such as the ordeal of medieval Europe, takes precedence of human witnesses: or because a recourse to arbitration, in the private domain of a king or of a squire, is too insignificant a procedure to have found its way into any historical records. It is such a system that seems to have prevailed in Serbia up to very recent times. It is such a system that, we hope to show, existed amongst the Achaeans in Homeric Greece.

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