

The Environment of Exile in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*

Despite the specificity of its title, Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* is a difficult play to locate in a fifth-century context. The closest connection that scholars have made to contemporary Greek settlements in the Chersonese derives from the geographical poem attributed to pseudo-Scymnus (833-930), which may have information from the third century BCE about the founding of Chersonesos by colonists from Delos and Heraclea on the Black Sea. The most likely date of such a settlement is in the late 420's BCE, but there are substantial archaeological records from the sixth century BCE (Hall, 2013). Information about the date of the play is equally scanty. C.W. Marshall's recent (2009) suggestion of 419 or soon afterward, based on meter and the likely contents of Sophocles' lost *Chryses* (probably after 414), derives only from the preponderance of evidence.

The social and legal status of the Greek characters in the play, and their response to the physical environment of both the Taurian setting of the play and their Greek homelands off stage (cf. Lloyd, 2012), provides some insight into the world view of the poet; this in turn may shed light on dating. The Greek characters are exiles or slaves; in the Chersonese, the Greeks are divided between those allowed to live (Iphigenia and the chorus) and those destined for human sacrifice (Orestes and Pylades). Iphigenia's position is the most complex (Burnett, 1971): dead to the Greeks and "hating all Greece for destroying (her)" (1187), she must prepare Orestes and/or Pylades for death but delegates the execution. Her hands-off attitude is consistent with her depiction of geography. Her most detailed descriptions of place are of Euripus and Aulis (6-9) and the ostensible marriage celebrations at Argos (365-368), before she was offered as a sacrifice. She calls her current city δυσχόρτους (219 "inhospitable," "with little food," a depiction contradicting that of the cowherd, who describes herds of cattle and places for purple-

fishing, a sign of a prosperous, advanced culture (260-63; cf. Kyriakou, 2006 on the related dye). Her primary reference now is the rocks of the Symplegedes (355).

Pylades for his part avoids geographical specifics. Orestes, as is consistent with living “nowhere and everywhere” (567), refuses at 496 and 506 to name his home city, before Iphigenia pries the information out of him at 508-10. His sole geographic epithet is ἰππιον (700) for Argos. Only after revealing his identity to Iphigenia does he mention Pelops’s old spear in Iphigenia’s room (726) and the details of his sojourn in Athens (961-979).

The chorus of female slaves, like other Euripidean choruses, contains ordinary people (see Mastronarde, 2010). They speak of longing to roam free like a halcyon (1089-1105), but this is not a typical choral refrain. Rather, it forms part of a detailed evocation of space and architectural features in both the Chersonese and Greece, beginning with the description of the temple during the *parodos* at 123-140. At 399 they call the Eurotas δονακόχλοον, “reed-green,” a *hapax* but probably secure (Platnauer, 1938, Kyriakou), while at 422 the Symplegedes becomes the more lyrical τὰς συνδρομάδας πέτρας (cf. Kyriakou on Pindar, P.4.208-9). The other odes provide details of Greece, or the sea that swept them away.

When Iphigenia asks the unsuspecting Orestes about her family, the coryphaeus laments, “What about me and my parents?” (578-9). The chorus’s anguish is swept aside until Iphigenia offers them safe return to Greece (1068) in return for their silence about the elite contingent’s escape. They are, however, initially left behind, despite longing to see the “sun’s race-course” over their home (1138-40) and to join the community marriage festivities (1141-1150).

Because of Athena’s instructions, Iphigenia, Orestes, and Pylades do not return home without the chorus (1467-1469). The freedom of some becomes the liberty of all, an injunction made clear when Thoas is compelled to abandon human sacrifice. This positive view of all parts

of Greece and the restoration of the Panhellenic exiles also has implications for the composition of the play. In particular, the connection between Argos, suzerain of Mycenae, and Athens suggests the Battle of Mantinea in 418 as a *terminus ante quem* (cf. Kagan, 1991), before the Sicilian expedition and the resumption of full-scale war.

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