

A Commentary on Euripides'
Iphigenia in Tauris

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erences Stockert on *IA* 174. The sum total of the ships in the Iliadic catalogue is higher (1186) and Thucydides (1.10.4) mentions around 1200. The sacrifice of Iphigeneia was performed in the context of a great national expedition. Although Iphigeneia has just claimed that her father sacrificed her for the sake of Helen (8), she now allows that his motives for undertaking the expedition were actually twofold, public and private. The latter, to assist his brother Menelaus in taking back his wife Helen, apparently provided the stimulus for, but it was not the sole purpose of, the expedition. Under the command of Agamemnon, who in *IT* does not share the office of commander-in-chief with Menelaus, the domestic problems of the Atreids led to confrontation with an important adversary and eventually to glory for all Hellas. Nevertheless, already in the *Iliad* Achilles complains that he fights for the sake of hateful Helen (19.324-25) and shoulders the burden of a war that only benefits the Atreids (1.152-68, 9.321-33); cf. *Od.* 11.438, 14.68-71. In tragedy the issue of Agamemnon's motives for consenting to the sacrifice of his daughter in order to recover an adulterous woman is raised time and again; see e.g. *A. Ag.* 192-249, *S. El.* 530-48, *An.* 624-25; cf. *Eur. El.* 1020-29, *IA* 350-62, 511-42, 1194-95.

στόλον: not exclusively but very often in Euripides in connection with nautical expeditions; see e.g. *Hc.* 1141, *HL.* 1427, *IA* 816, *Hy.* fr. 759a.83; cf. *S. Ph.* 71, 243-44, 247, 490, 499, 906. **τὸν καλλίνικον στέφανον...** **Ἀχαιοῖς:** cf. *IA* 1528-31. The article is deictic or emphatic "that famous crown"; cf. 543, 1242, Bond on *Herc.* 1414 and KG I.598. Cf. on 1366-67a below. **καλλίνικον:** the word is one of Euripides' favorites, used mainly in connection with Heracles. In extant literature it appears first in Pindar but was also perhaps earlier used by Archilochus; see Gerber on *P. O.* 9.1-4 and on 9.2. If there is irony in the statement, this adjective is likely to carry most of its weight; cf. Mastronarde on *Ph.* 1048. **Ἀχαιοῖς:** L's *Ἀχαιοῦς* leaves Agamemnon out of the circle of glory seekers. The Homeric designation *Ἀχαιοί* (cf. 527, 662) is used for Greeks, presumably as opposed to Trojans, in the context of the expedition; cf. on 359 (*Δαναΐδαι*). **μετελθεῖν:** for *μετέρχομαι* 'to go', 'to pursue to avenge', cf. *Cy.* 280-81 and *An.* 992. **Μενέλεωι χάριν φέρων:** cf. *S. El.* 576; the notion of Agamemnon's *χάρις* to Menelaus and the latter's obligation for reciprocation is a particularly prominent motif in Euripides' *Orestes*.

15-16. The problem that led to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia was either adverse winds (*Cypria* [Proclus, p. 41 Bernabé], *A. Ag.* 148-49, 192ff.) or lack of winds (*IA* 9-11, 88, 352, 1596-97, *S. El.* 564); for relevant information in later authors see Jebb on *S. El.* 564. Cf. Aretz (1999) 47 n.

126. (Usually, sailing is said to have been prohibited by Artemis because Agamemnon offended the goddess by killing one of her favorite animals or boasting of his hunting skills or both; see Jebb on *S. El.* 569, Aretz [1999] 47 n. 125 and cf. next n.) All modern scholars agree that in this play Iphigeneia points out lack of winds as the problem facing the fleet. **δεινῇ δ' ἀπλοΐαι**: L's text δεινῆς τ' ἀπλοΐας produces an impossible conjunction with **πνευμάτων τ' οὐ τυγχάνων**. The emendation (Rauchenstein [δ' Barnes]) produces a causal dat. joined with a causal participle (οὐ τυγχάνων); Diggle (1994) 53 has a list of similar examples. ἄπλοια, 'weather unsuitable for sailing', is first found in Aeschylus (*Ag.* 148-49) for the fleet's inability to set sail from Aulis because of unfavorable winds. The word is also used a number of times by Thucydides. Herodotus (2.119) uses it once in the context of a story unattested elsewhere but probably based on the legend of Iphigeneia's sacrifice: after recovering Helen and his stolen goods in Egypt, Menelaus could not sail because of unfavorable weather and resorted to the sacrifice of two local children.

ἔμπυρ': burnt sacrifices, usually offered in order to divine the outcome of a prospective battle. The manner in which the entrails of the victim and their contents (e.g. bile) were consumed by the fire (whether they cracked, burnt evenly etc.) and the kind of flame they produced suggested the outcome of the battle. For the various kinds of augury see Burkert (1985) 112-14 and for burnt sacrifices see M.H. Jameson, "Sacrifice Before Battle" in Hanson (1991) 205; van Straten (1995) 156-57 discusses evidence from vase-painting depicting various stages of a burnt sacrifice. The subject of **ἦλθε** must be Agamemnon, for otherwise the participle οὐ τυγχάνων would remain hanging in the air. The first clause provides the time and circumstances under which the action of the second takes place; for this use of **καί** see *GP* 293.

17-34. Artemis' anger at Agamemnon is the traditional reason for the unfavorable weather at Aulis; Calchas and Odysseus are usually those responsible for singling out Iphigeneia as the desired victim and for ensnaring her respectively. However, the cause of divine anger, the failure of Agamemnon to fulfill a vow to sacrifice the most beautiful animal of the year to Artemis, is novel; cf. previous n. The present version of the Aulis story absolves Agamemnon of hubris and makes him guilty of pronouncing an incautious vow. The motif of the incautious vow is widespread in both literature and folklore; for a collection of evidence see Frazer [*Apollod.*] Appendix XII and cf. West (1997) 441-42. It is nowhere coupled with failure to fulfill the vow. Euripides may have improvised; perhaps the implication is that Agamemnon had failed

to fulfill the vow correctly and not that he had failed to fulfill it altogether.

The rationale of Artemis' demand for the Aulis sacrifice, secret rescue and transport of the victim to Tauris is difficult to understand. The play does not address these issues. The mortal characters make confident pronouncements about divine motivation and behavior (77-94, 380-91, 475-78, 570-75, 711-15, 1012-16, 1234-83, 1414-19) but they are more often than not wrong, partial or misguided; see Introduction Ic(2) and cf. III(1)c. The opaque role of Artemis in Iphigeneia's sacrifice and rescue provides the first indication in the play that the behavior of the gods is inscrutable to humans.

17-20a. ὦ τῆσδ' ἀνάσσων Ἑλλάδος στρατηγίας,/ Ἀγάμεμνον: the honorific address does not incorporate Agamemnon's lineage. The fullness of the address, an expanded version of the common epic formula (Ἀτρεΐδῃ κύδιστε) ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον, in a way duplicates Agamemnon's office: he is said to be both king and general, literally the 'king of the military command'. For the construction cf. *H. Il.* 20.180 (a problematic line), *Od.* 24.30 and *Lfgre* 796.30. For the metaphor 'king of x', castigated by Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1405a28-30), see Kannicht on *HL*. 1039-40. οὐ μή + aor. (more rarely pres.) subjunctive expresses strong denial of a future possibility and + fut. indicative strong prohibition; see KG II.221-23 and Schwyzer II.293. πρὶν ἂν κόρην σὴν Ἰφιγένειαν/ Ἄρτεμις λάβῃ σφαγεῖσσαν: = σφάγιον; cf. 558, *Or.* 658. For this construction, similar to the Latin *ab urbe condita* type, see Schwyzer II.404. L's λάβοι was perhaps a mistake due to τέκοι at the end of the line.

20b-24a. The present version of Agamemnon's offense against the goddess is rather elliptical. Iphigeneia, or Calchas, does not specify when the vow was made. Agamemnon apparently made it in the year of Iphigeneia's birth and neglected to fulfill it or did not fulfill it properly with the result that the goddess now demands her dues. It is possible that Euripides left the audience in the dark about the time of Agamemnon's vow until the end of the seer's pronouncement in order to maximize the surprise they share with a presumably stunned Agamemnon who now faces the consequences of a long-forgotten vow or perhaps realizes that the sacrifice offered long ago had not been adequate.

φωσφόρω: in her capacity as huntress and goddess of marriage, Artemis is bearer of light (= torches), as is Hecate with whom she is often identified. For the identification see FJW on *A. Su.* 676 and cf. Aretz (1999) 40 n. 91 and Johnston (1999) 211-13. For Hecate φωσφόρος see

Kannicht on *Hl.* 569 and Diggle on *Pha.* 268 (fr. 781.59). For Artemis see e.g. S. *OT* 206-7, *Tr.* 214, Farnell 2.458, 573-74 and for her association with light cf. E. Parisinou, *The Light of the Gods* (London 2000) 46-48, 81-83, 151-56. **θύσειν**: for the meaning of the verb, originally 'to make an offering, usually burnt' see Casabona (1966) 69-85, esp. 75-80. **Κλυταιμῆστρα**: the first of only two mentions of the name in the play (the other at 238). For the form and etymology of the name see on 208; for Clytaemestra in the play cf. on 210 and 811-26, 926-27. **τὸ καλλιστεῖον εἰς ἔμ' ἀναφέρων**: an indignant or bitter parenthesis, the outpouring of the speaker's feelings in the middle of reported speech. Tragic characters often express hostility or contempt, always unjustified, toward seers; cf. 532-33 and 574-75 and see e.g. Mikalson (1991) 92-101 and Stockert on *IA* 520-21. **καλλιστεῖον** or **καλλίστευμα** is the most beautiful offering or person (see *Ph.* 215 with Mastronarde's n.). Calchas awards to Iphigeneia the prize for supreme beauty. The choice of the verb ἀναφέρω in connection with the victim of the sacrifice may be ironic because the verb is commonly used by Euripides for the attribution of responsibility to a god (cf. 390).

24b-27. καί μ' Ὀδυσσέως τέχναις/ μητρὸς παρείλοντ' ἐπὶ γάμοις Ἀχιλλέως: with Lenting's τέχναι the verb acquires an explicit subject but the emendation is not necessary. For the marriage intrigue see Introduction II(1). As often in tragedy, Odysseus appears here as the wily double-dealer who masterminds plans to trick the innocent for the benefit of himself and/or his associates. Marriage to a warrior was a valid reason for a maiden to visit a military camp and Achilles was a natural choice for Agamemnon's son-in-law. Agamemnon's attempt in the *Iliad* (9.141-47) to propitiate Achilles by giving the insulted hero one of his daughters in marriage may owe something to the intrigue story. In *IT*, as in *IA*, Achilles is not among the masterminds of the intrigue but it is unclear whether he was aware of it or not. Unlike his counterpart in *IA*, he does not become involved in the sacrifice of Iphigeneia. In *IT*, moreover, Clytaemestra does not accompany her daughter to Aulis; cf. 365-68, 818-21.

The reference to the actual sacrifice is brief (and replicated with minor changes at 783-86) but later on Iphigeneia will provide two emotional accounts of the brutal act (361-71, 852-61); cf. on 203-35. It is the background to the sacrifice that is of interest here. The dramatic reversal of the girl's fortune and the hint at her helplessness in the face of cruel deception underscore the pathos of her situation. The only sign of self-pity on Iphigeneia's part in the monologue is significantly positioned between the reference to her arrival at Aulis and to her sacrifice:

the innocent becomes wretched (τάλαινα) as soon as she arrives at Aulis. ἐλθοῦσα δ' Αὐλίδ': terminal accusatives appear also at 85, 341, 402, 480, 521, 534, 1124, 1138, 1216, 1421, 1449. The first and last mark the beginning and end of Iphigeneia's adventure, her arrivals at Aulis and at Athens. For terminal accusatives in fifth-century tragedy and lyric see Bers (1984) 62-85. ἡ τάλαινα': here 'miserable'; for the full range of meanings see Denniston on *El.* 1171 and J.R. Wilson, "Τόλμα and the meaning of τάλας" *AJP* 92 (1971) 292-300. ἐκαινόμην: inceptive or conative imperfect.

28-30. Wilkins on *Hrcld.* 399-409 notes that, when an animal is substituted for a human, a non-sacrificial animal is chosen as the substitute. In Greek myth this is the only substitution of an animal for a human sacrificial victim that the sacrificers do not perceive. The rescue of Iphigeneia would not necessitate an animal substitute unless the sacrifice was demanded by the goddess and had to be performed, which implies that Calchas interpreted the will of Artemis correctly. The goddess makes sure that the sacrifice takes place despite her abduction of Iphigeneia. If Artemis only meant to deceive the army, she would not have to provide a real sacrificial victim: she could substitute an image for Iphigeneia, as e.g. in the Hesiodic *Catalogue* (23a M-W); cf. the image of Helen that Hera gave to Paris in Euripides' *Helen* (31ff.).

ἐξέκλεψεν...ἀντιδοῦσα: coincident use of the aor. part.; see on 593b. Artemis stole Iphigeneia away by providing a substitute, not as a result of providing a substitute; substitution and secret abduction are aspects of the same action. ἀντιδοῦσα suggests a fair exchange (e.g. 737, *Al.* 340, 956 *El.* 957), sometimes an exchange of favors (e.g. *Hrcld.* 220, *Hc.* 272, *Herc.* 1337) – Artemis would not deprive her worshippers and herself of the opportunity to offer and receive a sacrifice. διὰ...αἰθέρα: cf. e.g. 889 (δι' ὁδοῦς) and contrast 890 (διὰ...πέτρας), *Andr.* fr. 124.2 (διὰ...αἰθέρος); for the two constructions cf. Mastro-narde on *Ph.* 1286. The aether is a natural highway for gods and their protégés in Euripides; see K. Matthiessen, "Zur Theonoeszene der euripideischen 'Helena'" *Hermes* 96 (1968) 699-701 and cf. Stevens on *An.* 1228 and Sommerstein on *Ar. R.* 892. τῇνδ' indicates explicitly for the first time the location of the drama, although the audience must have already known or suspected it; see also on 34. The demonstrative is often used to designate the scene of the play in prologues; see Barrett on *Hi.* 12 and cf. R. Kassel, "Euripides Bakchen 23" *ZPE* 21 (1976) 35-36 = H.-G. Nesselrath (ed.), *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin/N. York, 1991) 187-88.

31-33. οὗ γῆς ἀνάσσει βαρβάροισι βάρβαρος/ Θόας: γῆς cannot be construed with οὗ because, apart from the awkwardness of the phrase, the verb, which takes the genitive, would have to be construed with the dative βαρβάροισι. Taking γῆς with the verb makes βαρβάροισι dat. of advantage (cf. *Or.* 1690); it can hardly be locative dat., as Bruhn implies, because the location has already been made clear by Ταύρων χθόνα at 30. For the interchangeability of the terms γῆ, χθών, πόλις, χώρα in tragedy see Collard on *Su.* 1194-5. αἶα, the much rarer epic synonym, occurs in this play at 402, 435 and 786, all for Tauris. βάρβαρος is not redundant after βαρβάροισι because a ruler is not necessarily of local extraction. The specification certainly does not indicate that Thoas' rule is arbitrary, as Cropp (49 n. 64) suggests.

The name, or probably nick-name, of the king was very likely invented by Euripides. (Ar. fr. 373, which refers to the Lemnian Thoas, the father of Hypsipyle, as the slowest of mortals, has been thought to parody 32 but this assumption is rather gratuitous and the comedy may have preceded *IT*.) Given the common tragic motif of significant names, Iphigeneia's explanation of the name might lead the audience to suppose that its significance would eventually become manifest and Thoas would demonstrate his swiftness by pursuing or overtaking someone (cf. on 1325-26) but this does not come to pass in the play – at the end Athena stops Thoas from pursuing Orestes (1435-45). πόδα τιθείς: a fairly common idiom (see Collard on *Su.* 170-71), usually for walking; cf. *Andr.* fr. 124.3 (walking through the air or flying), A. *Eum.* 294 (dancing). Here it refers to running and may have been chosen because of the presence of θ in both participle and name. For significant names in Euripides see Kannicht on *HL*. 13-15; cf. Kambitsis on *Ant.* fr. 2 (fr. 181 182), Silk (1974) 175 n. 11 and Kraus (1998) 144.

34. The same demonstrative pronoun as at 30 indicates the temple in front of which the drama takes place. The audience have already noticed that the facade of the stage-building represents a temple. The occupant of the temple is named two lines below but it is obvious here already that she is Artemis. For the form ἱερέα cf. 1399, *Or.* 261 and *Ba.* 1114 with Dodds' n.

35-[41]. Iphigeneia now reaches the last and, for dramatic purposes at least, most important part of her story, her current duties as priestess of Artemis. The main problems with this passage are whether the explicit reference to human sacrifices is to be kept and how to construe the lines if it is. Editors have proposed various deletions or emendations; for a discussion of the problems with the language and syntax of this passage