

The cold case of *Aitnaiai*'s stagecraft

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ABSTRACT

Although no Aeschylean *hypomnemata* have been preserved, the papyri have returned evidences of ancient scholarship, such as fragments with *marginalia* and *hypotheses* of several lost tragedies. For this reason, it is difficult to compare the *scholia* tradition, but it provides particular value for these ancient annotations. If the limited papyrus notes could testify a lower fortune of Aeschylus, the discovery of scholar materials, linked with lost tragedies, denotes that his productions was still available during the first centuries of Imperial Age. Interesting evidence is *P.Oxy.* XX 2257, which offers important information on the *Aitnaiai* stagecraft. My purpose is to reconstruct the drama setting and explain the technical modality of scene changes.

KEYWORDS

Aeschylus, fragmentary drama, Greek tragedy, *Aitnaiai*

INTRODUCTION

P.Oxy. 2257 (MP³ 47; LDAB 121; TM 59026)¹ was found by B. P. Grenfell and S. A. Hunt at Oxyrhynchus and published in 1952 by E. Lobel in the XX volume of *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* as

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¹Image of the papyrus discussed is easily accessible on <https://163.1.169.40/cgi-bin/library?e=d-000-00-0POxy-00-0-0-0prompt-10-4-0-0-11-1-en-50-20-about-00031-001-1-0utf-00&a=d&c=POxy&cl=CL3.3&d=HASH919fd088d13f0ad125735e>.

scrap of Aeschylean papyrus. In 2004 a new edition of the papyrus was published within *Commentaria et Lexica Graeca in Papyris Reperta* (CLGP) by L. Arata, G. Bastianini and F. Montanari.²

The papyrus preserves eight fragments: fr. 2–8 are small or medium size with several illegible lines;³ fr. 1 contains a particularly compact piece (8×12.6 cm). It is difficult to judge if the fragments derive from the same roll, but it is as likely as not that two or three different rolls are represented in the collection.⁴

For the purposes of this article, I am drawing attention to fr. 1, which is useful for the *Aitnaiai's* stagecraft reconstruction. The larger fragment consists of 14 lines and it is partly legible. The written piece (6.4×6.5 cm) was glued on another papyrus: this is visible thanks to some darker vertical bands on the *recto* (\rightarrow), and it could be explained by a reuse of the material. Underneath the last lines the papyrus is blank as well as the back.

The papyrus is datable on palaeographical standpoint to the later second century AD. The script is a rounded upright capital of small size, employed for annotations. The *mise en page* is almost good, and there are lectional signs: it is possible to see a great use of abbreviations (see l. 5: μ^η], ... ε^τ , $\alpha\iota\chi\chi^\nu$; l. 7: $\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma^\lambda$; l. 8: $\alpha\chi\iota\lambda^\lambda$; l. 9: $\kappa\epsilon\iota^\tau$, $\delta\epsilon\nu^\tau$; l. 11: γ^ι ; l. 13: $\pi\epsilon\rho\alpha\iota\nu\epsilon^\tau$; l. 14: $\tau\sigma^\pi$); a simplification of the graphic sequences (see l. 8: $\varepsilon\rho\alpha$ [c] $\tau\zeta$ lls. 11, 13); and an use of non-alphabetic signs above certain letters to represent prepositions and particles (see l. 3: $\acute{\tau} = \tau\omega\nu$; ll. 8 and 9: $\acute{\kappa} = \kappa\alpha\tau\acute{\alpha}$; l. 8: $\acute{\mu} = \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$, $\acute{\gamma} = \gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$; l. 9: $\acute{\upsilon} = \upsilon\pi\sigma$ -, $\acute{\delta} = \delta\acute{\epsilon}$; l. 13: $\acute{\delta} = \delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$) or special symbols (l. 14: $/ = \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}$). Moreover, it can be noted the presence of dieresis (l. 6: $\grave{\iota}$) and iotacism (fr. l. 12: $\xi\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$); the respect of the bilinear scheme (with the exception of *rho* and, sometimes, *tau*); the *diplé obelismene* at the end of the prose section. The abbreviations led to suppose that this text was intended for the private use of scholars.

²See ARATA, L. – BASTIANINI, G. – MONTANARI, F.: Aeschylus. In BASTIANINI, G. – HASLAM, M. – MAEHLER, H. – MONTANARI, F. – ROMER, C. (eds): *Commentaria et lexica Graeca in papyris reperta* (CLGP): Pars I. *Commentaria et lexica in auctores. vol. 1. Aeschines – Bacchylides. Fasc. 1. Aeschines – Alcaeus*, München–Leipzig 2004, 13–73.

³For fr. 2–8, it is impossible to hypothesize a direct connection with the topic of the first fragment, due to the incomplete conditions of the marginal notes and, above all, of the non-surviving poetic text.

⁴See LOBEL, E.: P.Oxy. 2257. In LOBEL, E. – WEGENER, E. P. – ROBERTS, C. H. (eds): *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Part XX*. London 1952, 67–69.



SOME NOTES ON THE TEXT⁵

]...[...].φ[
].ρ...ωναφ[...]......[
]..[...].τατ(ων) ..[...].α...πα (ἐπτά)
].[...].παντ[...].πρα...
]..[...].μη()..[...].ετ()..τε Αἰσχύλ(-) (5)
].. [εἰς] Ἀθήνας ἐκ Δελφῶν μ(ε)τ(α)-
 βί]βάζον[τ(αί)].[...]...... ὁ Τρωῖλος Σοφοκλ(έους)
 κ(αὶ)] οἱ Ἀχίλλ(έως) ἐρα[τ(αί). κ(ατὰ) μ(έν) γ(άρ) τὸ πρῶτον μέρ[ος
 αὐτοῦ ἡ σκηνὴ ὑ(πό)κειτ(αί) Αἴτνη, κ(ατὰ) δ(ὲ) τὸ δεῦτερον
 Ξουθία, κ(α)τ(ὰ) δ(ὲ) τὸ τρίτον πάλιν Αἴτνη, εἴτ' ἄ- (10)
 πὸ ταύτης εἰ[c Λε]ογίνους μ(ε)τ(α)βάλλει κ(αὶ) γί(νεται) ἡ
 σκηνὴ Λεον[τ(ίνων) χῶ(ρα)], μ(ε)τ(ὰ) δ' αὐτὸν Συρακοῦσαι
 κ(αὶ) τὰ λοιπὰ .[± 8 lett.] .ηἰ δ(ια)περαίνετ(αί)
 δ(ε) (ἐστ) τόπ(ος) .[]
 >—
 (margin)

4. τ.[: .[legi. Lobel : fort. τ(ων) Bastianini :]ἐπ' αὐτῶν puta. Bastianini | πρα... : πράγματα Poli-Palladini
 || 5. Αἰσχύλ(-) : Αἰσχύ(λου) con. Bastianini || 6.[εἰς] Ἀθήνας ἐκ Δελφῶν μ(ε)τ(α)- : εἰς Ἀ]θήνας ἐκ
 Δελφῶν μ(ε)τ(α)- Lloyd-Jones post Lobel || 7. βί]βάζον[τ(αί) Bastianini : βί]βάζε[ται Lloyd-Jones post
 Lobel |]... : Ev]δυμ(ίων) Lobel in app. | ὁ Τρωῖλος Σοφοκλ(έους) Bastianini : Τρωῖ. Κεφαλ(ος) Lobel in
 app. : Τρωῖαν Σοφοκλ() Poli-Palladini || 8. κ(αὶ)] Bastianini | μέρ[ος Bastianini : μ(έρος) Lobel || 9.
 ὑ(πό)κειτ(αί) etiam Bastianini : ὑ(πό)κει[τ(αί) Lobel || 10. δ(ὲ) τὸ Bastianini : δὲ [τ]ὸ Lobel || 12.
 Λεον[τ(ίνων) χῶ(ρα)] : Λεον[τ(ίνων) πόλις] Ferrari : Λεον[τ(ίνων) χῶ(ρος)] et sim. Bastianini || 13. .[
 fort. π[ι(ερ)] vel π[ι(αρά) Bastianini | .[± 8 lett.] .ηἰ : ἐ[ν Τεμενί]τῃ Pfeiffer ap. Lobel : ἐ[ν τῇ Παλι]κῇ
 Ferrari

 ...
 ...
 ... (seven)
 ...
 ...Aeschylus (5)
 ...it moves from Delphi to Athens
 ...Sophocles' *Troilus*
 And the *Lovers of Achilles*. In the first act the scene is Aetna,
 in the second Xuthia, in the third back to Aetna, then (10)
 from this place the scene changes to Leontini
 and becomes Leon[tini], after that it's Syracuse,
 and the rest concludes [± 8 lett.],
 which is a .[]
 >—
 (margin)

Apart from the corrupt lines at the beginning, the last part provides crucial evidence to hypothesize that the text is a *hypothesis* of a drama. According to van Rossum-Steenbeek,⁶ the

⁵The text partly follows BASTIANINI (n. 2), the *apparatus* and the translation are mine.

⁶See ROSSUM-STEEENBEK, M. VAN: *Greek Readers' Digest? Studies on a Selection of Subliterary Papyri*. Leiden – New York – Köln 1998, 32.



scrap represents a “learned hypothesis” of *Eumenides*, due to the possibility of the presence, in the lost part, of learned notes about historical information on the performance and the summary of the play. However, this classification does not clarify the exceptional interest of scene changes. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the text also like a “descriptive hypothesis”, because there are not only references about content, but also activities on the stage, like the rare peculiarity of *Aitnaiai*, mentioned at lls. 9–14.⁷

At l. 5 it is possible to read *Aicχύλ(-)*, the name of Aeschylus or a derivative of it. The author refers to *Eumenides* due to the attestation of Delphi and Athens, setting places of the tragedy (l. 6). It is interesting the presence of $\mu(\epsilon)\tau(\alpha)\beta\iota[\beta\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omicron\nu[\tau(\alpha\iota)$, a verb used to indicate the translation from one space to another (see *LSJ s.v.*).

The introductory l. 7 consists of uncertain letters, but at the end it reads $\acute{\omicron}\ \tau\rho\omega\tilde{\iota}\lambda\omicron\varsigma\ \Sigma\phi\omicron\kappa\lambda(\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\upsilon\varsigma)$, a tragedy of Sophocles, based on Troilus, the younger son of Hecuba and Priamus, who was killed by Achilles. However, no other *testimonia* confirm if there were scene changes in this drama. Another Sophoclean title is mentioned at the l. 8: $\rho\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\Lambda}\chi\iota\lambda\lambda(\acute{\epsilon}\omega\varsigma)\ \acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\ [c]\tau(\alpha\iota)$, a satyr play, which presumably narrates the homoerotic affairs of Achilles with scene changes. Snell,⁸ in fact, believed that the second scene took place in Troy, and two others in unknown places. However, from the ancient tradition no reference has been received about the plot setting.

At ll. 8–14, the anonymous scholar focuses the attention on some scenes set in eastern Sicily, but he does not quote title or author. In particular, the scholar uses the lemma *μέρος*,⁹ referred to $\tau\acute{\omicron}\ \pi\rho\acute{\omega}\tau\omicron\nu$ (l. 8), $\tau\acute{\omicron}\ \delta\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\nu$ (l. 9) and $\tau\acute{\omicron}\ \tau\rho\acute{\iota}\tau\omicron\nu$ (l. 10),¹⁰ to indicate different drama setting, but it is possible to count four or five scene changes (see *infra*).

THE STAGING PROBLEM

This intriguing fragment is likely referred to *Aitnaiai*,¹¹ a fragmentary drama of Aeschylus, known thanks to indirect tradition. But what were the plot and the genre? To clarify these aspects and the plausibly setting, it is remarkable to investigate the circumstance in which the drama was written.¹²

⁷See TAPLIN, O.: *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus. The Dramatic Use of Exits and Entrances in Greek Tragedy*. Oxford 1977, 49 n. 2.

⁸See Review of LOBEL–WEGENER–ROBERTS (n. 4) by B. SNELL in *Gnomon* 25 (1953) 433–440.

⁹The meaning of *μέρος* is generally debated: in fact, in ancient Greek exegesis the term indicates, according to Aristotle's *Poetics* (1452b14–27), prologue, episode, exodus, choral song. Moreover, the term is attested in the critical-philological lexicon starting from the Imperial Age. On this issue see PERRONE, S.: *Lost In Tradition*. Papyrus Commentaries on Comedies and Tragedies of Unknown Authorship. *Trend in Classics* 1.2 (2009) 203–240.

¹⁰Indeed, the translation of the term is not simple, due to various shapes over time, but the presence of the numeral led to deal with the meaning *actus* (“act”), as a part of a performance, assuming that every *μέρος* is a new scenario.

¹¹The *Catalogue* of codex M (T 78 Radt) preserves two titles, *Αἰτναῖαι νόθοι* and *Αἰτναῖαι γνήσιοι*, probably one genuine and one spurious; this makes difficult to identify the chorus. See SOMMERSTEIN, A. H. (ed.): *Aeschylus III: Fragments*. [LCL 505]. Cambridge 2008, 6–7.

¹²On this issue see, in particular, LUCAS DE DIOS, J. M. (ed.): *Esquilo. Fragmentos – Testimonios. Introducciones, traducción y notas*. Madrid 2008, 186–187.



As we learn from *Vita Aeschyli* (T 1. 33–34 Radt),¹³ Aeschylus arrived in Sicily when Hieron was founding Aetna (476/475 BC) to repopulate the Ionian colony of Katane with a Doric ethnicity. In this occasion, Hieron invited Aeschylus to produce a drama (*Aitnaiai*) as an auspice of good fortune for the inhabitants of the city.¹⁴ Indeed, this event plays a key role in the choice of a Sicilian setting and leads to a socio-political interpretation of the *pièce*.

Reference by Macrobius (*Sat.* 5. 19. 16–13 = A. fr. 6 Radt), in a passage dedicated to Virgilian *Aeneid*, suggests that Aeschylus stages the story of Palici, gods born from the relationship between Zeus and the nymph Talia, daughter of Hephaestus. The mythical contextualization seems to be traceable to the aetiological intent already attested in the *Vita*.¹⁵ Macrobius also informs us that the work was a *tragoedia*, even if some scholars suggest that it is a *Festspiel*¹⁶ or a satyr drama.¹⁷

Indeed, in this discussed reconstruction, important information can be derived from *P. Oxy.* 2257 fr. 1. The papyrus seems to suggest that the love affair of Zeus and Thalia is associated with other aetiological modes,¹⁸ which are likely connected with the Aetna's foundation, such as in *Eumenides*. Therefore, the ll. 9–14 show that the drama included two ethnical scenes and the other sets in eastern Sicily, which could be contextualized in different important moments of Sicilian history and Hieron life.

The first set (l. 9) is Aetna, likely the volcano and not the city founded by Hieron. In Macrobius verses (fr. 6 Radt), two characters talk about the etymology of Palici's name and the indigenous origin. This data is confirmed from archaeological evidence: the twins' cult was celebrated near volcano Aetna to protect agriculture.¹⁹ The ambiguity volcano/city seems a clear allusion to the homonymous city and it could be an evident homage to the founder Hieron.²⁰ Moreover, we know from Pindar (*P.* 1. 29–32, *O.* 4. 6–7; 6. 96; *N.* 1. 6) that the name Aetna is connected with Zeus Aetnaeus: Hieron, in fact, gave great impulse to his cult and established there his celebration.²¹ It is also possible that Zeus consummated his love affair with Thalia on the mount Aetna.

The second scene is Xuthia (l. 10): Diodorus (5. 8. 2) remembers that *Ξουθία* was the region around Leontini, which was called Xuthia in honor of its king Xuthos. A passage in Stephanus of Byzantium (*s.v. Xuthia* = Philist. *FGrH* 556 F 18), instead, identifies the toponym with a Sicilian

¹³See RADT, S. L. (ed.): *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta (TrGF). III: Aeschylus*. Göttingen 1985.

¹⁴See fr. 6, 281a–b, **451t Radt.

¹⁵Macrobius, however, does not explain if the drama was based on the Palici affair, or if there was only a brief *excursus* about them. We can also hypothesize that they played an epicoric role in the play, but there is no trace to demonstrate their exact role.

¹⁶See FRAENKEL, E.: Vermutungen zum Aetna-Festspiel des Aischylos. *Eranos* 52 (1954) 61–75.

¹⁷See POLI-PALLADINI, L.: Some reflections on Aeschylus' 'Aetnae(ae)'. *RhM* 144 (1991) 287–325.

¹⁸See REVERMANN, M.: Aeschylus' 'Eumenides', Chronotopes, and the "Aetiological Mode". In REVERMANN, M. – WILSON, P. J. (eds): *Performance, Iconography, Reception. Studies in Honour of Oliver Taplin*. Oxford 2008, 237–261.

¹⁹See BELLO, L.: Ricerche sui Palici. *Kokalos* 32 (1960) 71–97; CORBATO, C.: Le 'Etnee' di Eschilo. In GENTILI, B. (ed.): *Catania antica. Atti del Convegno della S.I.S.A.C. (Catania 23–24 maggio 1992)*. Pisa–Roma 1996, 61–72; LUCAS DE DIOS (n. 12) 183.

²⁰See LURAGHI, N.: *Tirannidi arcaiche in Sicilia e Magna Grecia da Panezio di Leontini alla caduta dei Dinomenidi*. Firenze 1994, 336–345.

²¹See POLI-PALLADINI (n. 17) 294 n. 24.



city, and obscurely adds that Xuthiates is an ethnonym. The ascription of Xuthia to a *pòlis* could be a scholar mistake, perhaps generated by the fact that it was an inhabited area near a well-known center. On this evidence, it seems compatible with the description of Xuthia like the *chora* around Leontini.²² Moreover, it is certain that the place was located on the fringes of the fertile Leontinian plain. Given that the *hypothesis* not only explicitly mentions Xuthia, but also clearly differentiates it from its neighbor Leontini (l. 11), it can safely assume that Xuthia served as an independent setting within the play.

About the ethnic origin of Xuthia and its political implications, various theses have been formulated,²³ but it is likely that the Xuthia setting “was a counter-Ionian geo-poetic claim by the tyrant of Syracuse to Xuthus’ Heraclid lineage and Dorian heritage”.²⁴ However, no element emerges to assert that the locality was connected to the Palici cult. At any way, for Poli-Palladini,²⁵ such as Aetna suggests the presence of Palici on the stage, the mention of Xuthis could refer to the role play of Xuthos on the stage, although the lack of evidence does not support it.

The third scene (l. 10) provides for a return to the volcano Aetna: here the use of *πάλλιν* indicates a repetition instead of an opposition, such as in common prose language. In fact, “the nuance of meaning ‘in turn’, which is brought forward by an opposition implied in the context, sometimes occurs both in poetry (see e.g. Soph. *El.* 371, 1436, *OT* 619) and in prose (see the instances in *LSJ*, s.v., III)”.²⁶ On the other hand, Garzya²⁷ thinks it is a reference to the founded city Aetna, having the idea that *πάλλιν* here means “in its turn” and, therefore, indicates a different location in spite of identity name with a previous location (l. 9).

At l. 11 the action moves in a new place: it is near Leontini, built on the hills around the Symethus plain. According to Diodorus (9. 49), Hieron settled the Naxians and Catanians (driven out of their fatherland) in Leontini, and ordered them to live in the city with its original inhabitants. It seems that the drama echoed the difficult political situation and the relationship between Ionic colonies and Doric ones that existed in Sicily during the Hieronian era.²⁸

The fifth scene is Syracuse (l. 12): it was founded by Archias of Corinth, a descendant of Heracles, and closely related to Hieron. For Poli-Palladini,²⁹ Syracuse is set in a mythical context: this is a way of referring to a future city, which would be founded in that place, but we

²²LA ROSA, V.: Le ‘Etnee’ di Eschilo e l’identificazione di Xuthia. *Archivio storico per la Sicilia orientale* 70 (1974) 151–164 believes that Xuthia should be associated with the necropolis of Badia’s Molino near the shrine of the Palici. CASSOLA, F.: Le genealogie mitiche e la coscienza nazionale greca. *RAAN* 28 (1953) 289–304 hypothesizes the town of Sortino, near a hill called Monte Suzio.

²³MAZZARINO, S.: *Il pensiero storico classico*. Bari 1966, I 155 n. 110 considers the *chora* an Ionian town. BERNABÒ BREA, L.: Xuthia e Hybla e la formazione della facies culturale di Cassibile. In *Atti della XIII Riunione dell’Istituto Italiano di Preistoria e Protostoria*. Firenze 1971, 1–33 argues the pre-Hellenic name of Leontini.

²⁴SMITH, D.: Sicily and the identities of Xuthos. In BOSHER, K. (ed.): *Theater outside Athens: Drama in Greek Sicily and South Italy*. Cambridge 2012, 112–136. Already POLI-PALLADINI (n. 17) 299–301 considers that Xuthos was mentioned as a nephew of Hippotes Heraclides, and Xuthia was a mythical antecedent to Doric (i.e. Syracusan) domination in opposition to an Ionian colonization; moreover, she excludes that Aeschylus wanted to underline the Aeolian origin.

²⁵See POLI-PALLADINI (n. 17) 305.

²⁶See POLI-PALLADINI (n. 17) 292 n. 20.

²⁷See GARZYA, A.: Sul problema delle ‘Etne(e)’ di Eschilo. *SycGymn* 30 (1977) 401–412.

²⁸See LURAGHI (n. 20) 335–46.

²⁹See POLI-PALLADINI (n. 17) 293.



have no reference in this sense. The following $\kappa(\alpha\iota) \tau\acute{\alpha} \lambda\omicron\upsilon\pi\acute{\alpha}$ (l. 13) is difficult to understand: the lacuna prevents us from clarifying which was the end place. Moreover, the sentence would not introduce the last change of scene, but could specify where the final act was set in Syracuse.³⁰ The integration $\acute{\epsilon}[\nu \text{ Τεμενί}] \tau\eta\iota$, proposed by Pfeiffer,³¹ relates to an ancient Syracusan district, where the theater was. Its name derived from the sanctuary of Apollo Temenita, placed on a hill outside the city, in a strategic position surrounded by a wall. However, the *lectio* $\acute{\epsilon}[\nu \text{ Τεμενί}] \tau\eta\iota$ is uncertain, and we should print it in apparatus. Despite this, it is evident that the drama, written and acted in Sicily on a Sycilian subject, ended in Syracuse, where the Hiero's court was. It is tempting to suppose that the last scene would be a tribute to the tyrant who had started a new policy in eastern Sicily.

As *P.Oxy.* 2257 fr. 1 demonstrates, the action of *Aitnaiai* takes place in five different locations: it starts at Aetna, moves to Xuthia (explicitly differentiated from its neighbor Leontini), then back to Aetna, then to Leontini, and finally to Syracuse. Given that the drama is one of the earliest dated Greek drama performance and the scene changes are rare in tragedy (except, among surviving plays, *Eumenides* and *Ajax*), the interpretive efforts are hampered by the fact that it is difficult to unfold the remarkable nature of its structure and the dramaturgical implications. Considering the problematic exceptionalism of the scene changes in *Aitnaiai*, the modern scholars have proposed various ways to distribute the scenes across the performance. They also have supposed that the play is a *unicum* or, rather, an unusual, especially for the celebrative purpose, but, apparently, an aetiological staging characterized as well the *Eumenides*. However, the lack of sources and comparisons, about the earlier dramatic device, prevents the reconstruction of plotting and stagecraft.

Whit regard to this, it is necessary to underline: 1) what is a change of scene; 2) how exactly the scene changes are staged and displayed to the characters and the audience; 3) who made these changes.³² Addressing these problems means coming up against a partial understanding of the staging of ancient Greek dramas, especially fragmentary ones. Moreover, the Greek plays are not only poetic text, but also scripts for a performance on stage, where actors enact. For this reason, even though the dramas contain numerous linguistic references to actors and staging, it needs to remember that there are other kinds of evidence, which are non-textual, but sometimes left to the audience imagination: e.g. the architecture of the theater, scenic elements (objects, masks, dresses etc.), and the context. These aspects are indispensable, but they are manifestly a limitation for the modern scholars due to the conditions of the ancient theater and the controversial interpretations of the survived materials (imagines of tragic scene on gems, vases, frescos, mosaics, sarcophagi).³³ Other difficulties derive from the fragmentary or uncertain texts.

In order to explain how was the *Aitnaiai*'s stagecraft, the comparison with other survives dramas seems helpful. In fact, the parallels could clarify techniques and dramaturgical choices to attempt a plausible solution.

In the third drama of *Oresteia*, the action moves from the temple of Apollo at Delphi (*Eu.* 40) to the temple of Athena on the Acropolis of Athens (235) and finally to the Areopagus

³⁰See POLI-PALLADINI (n. 17) 289–290.

³¹See LOBEL (n. 4).

³²An overview of these explanations is in TAPLIN, O.: *Greek Tragedy in Action*. London 2002².

³³See ARNOTT, P.: *Greek scenic conventions in the Fifth Century B.C.* Oxford 1962, 91–106.



tribunal (566).³⁴ The scene changes not only involve the shifting from one location to another, but also from indoor to outdoor, in a dynamic and innovative staging. In this case, internal evidences and textual passages allow considering the effective of scene changes:³⁵ some sort of articulation in the overall structure are provided, and verbal indications of the new setting are given. At *Eu.* 40–45 (first scene) we are informed by the Pythia that Orestes is supplicating at the *omphalos* inside the Delphic temple; at *Eu.* 231–242 (second scene), Orestes explains how he has come to Athena's temple on Apollo's instructions (78–83); at the end, the scene is set on the Areopagus (*Eu.* 566, third scene), and it is clear through the words of Athena (685–690).³⁶ Nevertheless, it is difficult enough to claim how scene changes were staged, and if the chorus left the scene when the setting was going to shift. On this issue, various hypotheses have been formulated,³⁷ but even the introduction of the *skéné*,³⁸ as integral part of the stage in the *Oresteia*,³⁹ does not resolve the staging problem.⁴⁰ Thus, some scholars⁴¹ argue that the temple of Apollo at Delphi was transformed into temple of Athena “so verbally”⁴² and without concrete modification of the scene. However, it is also possible the insertion of scenic elements to indicate the new place, for example a statue, which represented first the temple of Apollo and then the temple of Athena, and it was taken off during a song to suggest the scene in open air. Certainly, in a theater based essentially on the word, it is easy to suppose that new and few elements were enough to mark different dramatic conditions.

Another example of scene changes is Sophocles' *Ajax*. The first scene is set in Achaean camp, perhaps at right in front of Ajax's tent; later, the setting slips (*Aj.* 654) into some “intact place of human footprint” (657), probably towards the seashore, where Ajax plausibly pronounces the last monologue (815–865). At *Aj.* 892, the markup language (*νάπους*, “bushes”) of the chorus speech could confirm the suicide setting far from the Achaean camp. In this regard, two sources cannot be ignored: 1) *schol. vet. ad S. Aj.* 815a on scene shifts in the drama; 2) *Poetics* (1449a18) of Aristotle on the Sophoclean invention of *skênographia*. Considering this, we can admit a scene change, but it is necessary to clarify how it was staged. It is believable that the *skéné* building represents a hybrid type of space, which is physically contiguous with the acting area as

³⁴It notes that in *P.Oxy.* 2257 fr. 1 the unknown scholar mentions only two the cities of Delphi and Athens: it is like he wants to highlight the change of geographical reality from the Phocis to Attica: in fact, the Areopagus, third and last setting of the drama, is always set in Athens, as the Athena's temple, even if it is external unlike the two previous. However, we could suppose that in the gap to the l. 8 the third scene was quoted, but it is uncertain.

³⁵See SCULLION, J. S.: *Three studies in Athenian dramaturgy*. Stuttgart 1994, 110–111.

³⁶See BROWN, A. L.: Some Problems in the ‘Eumenides’ of Aeschylus. *JHS* 102 (1982) 26–32.

³⁷See TAPLIN: The Stagecraft (n. 7) 362–415; MEDDA, E.: Uno spazio per morire: riflessioni sceniche sul suicidio di Aiace. In MOST, G. – OZBEK, L. (eds): *Staging ‘Ajax’s Suicide*. Pisa 2015, 159–180.

³⁸LIBRÁN MORENO, M.: La *σκηνή* en los fragmentos trágicos anteriores a la ‘Orestía’. *Myrtia* 17 (2002) 57–85 arguments the possibility that a *skéné* was already present in fragmentary tragedies before *Oresteia*. On the *skéné*, see LIAPIS, V.: Genre, Space, and Stagecraft in ‘Ajax’. In MOST–OZBEK (n. 37) 121–158.

³⁹According to MEDDA (n. 37) 171–172, the *skéné* was a polyvalent backdrop, which not only could be appropriately decorated, but also, if necessary, be ignored or absent.

⁴⁰See REHM, R.: The Staging of ‘Suppliants’ Plays. *GRBS* 29 (1988) 263–307, here 290–301; GARVIE, A. F.: The death of Ajax. In MOST–OZBEK (n. 37) 31–46, here 31, 35–36.

⁴¹See SCULLION (n. 35) 80; FINGLASS, P. J. (ed.): *Sophocles ‘Ajax’*. Cambridge 2011, 13.

⁴²SCULLION, S.: Camels and Gnats: Assessing Arguments about Staging. In MOST–OZBEK (n. 37) 78.



well as an extension of it. In the plurality of interpretations, the hypothesis of Medda⁴³ could be right: wooden panels would be installed on the front of *skené* and they would be completely or partially removed at Aj. 814 to be replaced by other painted panels as bushes.

Although the study of comparable cases does not allow us to resolve the problems of *Aitnaiai*, they allow arguing that there are similar stage instructions for scene changes. In addition, archaeological traces of the Hieronian theater cannot be overlooked. With respect to this, Corbato⁴⁴ argues that it was possible that the well-equipped Hieronian theater at Syracuse involved scene changes, thanks to exceptional scenic arrangements. In fact, the *skené* was formed by the system of “antenne animate”,⁴⁵ which were carved into the rock within the cave and were likely supported by vertical and horizontal wooden elements. The mechanism is not well defined, but we hypothesize that the structure was easily mountable and removable. In this way, it was assured a spatial shifting with the inclusion of different decorated stage, probably in a limited period of time.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, it is evident that the current knowledge of *Aitnaiai* stagecraft is incomplete. We can only propose where the action place was, but not solve the problem of the staging. Indeed, in pointing out archeological sources and literary parallels with the configuration of the stage action in the *Eumenides* and *Ajax*, we can suggest the presence of some basic arrangements and wooden panels, which were symbolically decorated to represent different places. In fact, it was not necessarily a realistic scenario, but there were only some details for identifying the sets. For this reason, we should remember that in a performance the visual experience combines three kinds of elements: the intent of the author, the interpretation of actors and the imagination of the audience. However, this does not explain how the chorus could leave the stage during a scene change, or if it stayed in the *orchestra*, or if the stage was completely cleared of actors at each new place. Taplin,⁴⁶ on the basis of *Eumenides*, conjectures various alternatives about the exits and the re-entries of the chorus in each *μέρος*.⁴⁷ One most likely possibility is that the chorus could be stayed in the *orchestra*, allowing more easily the shifting of scene. Another solution is that the scene changes were not explicit nor tied to any specific moment. Nevertheless, we should be inclined to recognize the spectacular staging, if the anonymous scholar mentions the shifting of scenes. From the textual criticism of the fragments to the dramaturgical evidence, the uncertainties of the staging of the *Aitnaiai* remain numerous. Therefore, the discussion, even if enriched by the analysis of the sources, is incomplete to provide a single interpretative solution, which could be definitive.

⁴³See MEDDA (n. 37).

⁴⁴See CORBATO (n. 19) 67 n. 17.

⁴⁵See RIZZO, G. E.: *Il teatro greco di Siracusa*. Milano 1923, 77–81.

⁴⁶See TAPLIN: *The Stagecraft* (n. 7) 416–417.

⁴⁷See also POLI-PALLADINI (n. 17) 318–319.

