

The True Colors of *κηκίς* (Aesch. *Ag.* 960)

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* blood, sacrifice, and kin slayings are intensified scene by scene and become especially prominent during the tapestry scene. Little has been said about the term *κηκίς* (*Ag.* 960) and its sacrificial and ritual nuances have not yet been explored extensively (Blomfield 1826, Fraenkel 1962, Lebeck 1971, Schütz 1779). In this paper, I expand the argument that Lebeck initiated in 1971, where she argues that the color of *πορφύρα* (*πορφυρόστρωτος πόρος*, *Ag.* 910) refers to the bloodshed produced by kin killings in the *Agamemnon*. Also, I extend the exploration of blood imagery and focus on the thematic connotations of the phrase *κηκίδα παγκαίνιστον* ("an ever renewed dying stain," *Ag.* 960) which ties in with other references of shedding blood in tragedy. My analysis demonstrates that the phrase *κηκίδα παγκαίνιστον* (*Ag.* 960) participates in the vocabulary of blood and killings as well as encompasses the sacrificial vocabulary used to describe such killings in the trilogy. I begin by discussing the different definitions for the word *κηκίς* commencing with the Hippocratic corpus. In *De morbis popularibus* 2.6.27.1, it indicates something dark and black (*κηκίς μέλαινα*). Then, I discuss its different occurrences in poetry (e.g., Sophocles *Philoctetes* 696, Apoll. Rhod. 4.600). I also compare the importance of the phrase, *κηκίδα παγκαίνιστον* ("an ever renewed dying stain," *Ag.* 960) within the tapestry imagery (Lebeck 1971) by connecting it to other color words in the carpet scene (*πορφυρόστρωτος πόρος*, *πορφύρας*, *Ag.* 910, 957). As Lebeck argues (1971), the moment Agamemnon steps on the *ἄβατον* carpet, he reenacts his responsibility for Iphigenia's sacrifice (*παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων* "primal source of woe" *Ag.* 223) as well as the origins of the crimes of his lineage (*πρώταρχον ἄτην* "the primal sin" *Ag.* 1192-3).

The *κηκίς* refers to the color of the purple dye, while the adjective *παγκαίνιστον* points out the element of renewability. Next, I analyze how the connotations of the color purple contextualize the tapestry scene in relation to Agamemnon's murder. I then situate the ritual implications of *κηκῖδα παγκαίνιστον* (Ag. 960), in relation to Clytemnestra's description of Agamemnon's ritual slaughter (*ἔσφαζ'* Ag. 1432). By examining the sacrificial connotations of *κηκῖδα παγκαίνιστον* (Ag. 960) I will demonstrate how this phrase within the context of the carpet scene underlines the connection between Iphigenia's sacrifice (*σφάζαι, σφαγήσεται* Eur. *Iphigenia in Aulis* 1351, 1361), and Agamemnon's slaughter by Clytemnestra, reenacting the impious continuation of the generational violence of the royal house of the Atreids (Zeitlin 1971). *Κηκίς πανκαίνιστος* therefore, intensifies blood imagery, since it is entwined not only with the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, as a retribution for his violent conduct and deeds, but also as a reflection of the past, and a predicting of the future. This circle of bloodshed (ending eventually with Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus), where each act of murder is repaid by another, reveals the meaning of *πανκαίνιστος* and anticipates Orestes' revelation of his mother's and her lover's corpses after the murder in the *Choephoroi*.

Bibliography

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