

Euripides' *Ion*, Poetic Genealogies, and the Ethnic Identity of Eastern Sicily
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The genealogical issues explored by Euripides in the *Ion* have generally been interpreted as expressing an innovative new kind of Athenian propaganda during the Peloponnesian War. In brief, Xouthos, married to the daughter of the King of Athens, has three sons named Doros, Achaïos, and Ion. Ion's real father, however, revealed over the course of the play, is the god Apollo. With Ion as eponym of the Ionians and Doros of the Dorians, the asymmetrical paternal relationship established between them in the play serves as a thinly veiled expression of Athenian wartime ideology. Yet Ion and Doros are not the only ones to receive revisions to their ancestry in the *Ion*, for Xouthos himself gets a slight nudge to his genealogy as well. Few, if any, however, have noted this obscure aspect of Euripides' revisionism; none have asked whether or not there existed some "Xouthian" place or people whose identity might have been subject to wartime ideological contestation by the Athenians in a similar way.

As it turns out, there was indeed a place called Xouthia. The three scant notices we have about it, furthermore, agree in identifying it with part or all of the fertile plain of eastern Sicily, including the land around Leontini and the hinterland of Syracuse south of Aetna. Xouthia, in other words, is an obscure toponym for the very region in which much of the disastrous Sicilian Expedition played out, contemporary with the production of Euripides' *Ion*. Thus, if we interpret the genealogical manipulation of each characters in the play under identical principles, and if the manipulation of Doros and Ion represents Athenian propaganda in the wider context of the Peloponnesian War, then a manipulated Xouthos should represent Athenian propaganda in the context of the Sicilian Expedition.

The earlier genealogical traditions Euripides is transforming have often been assumed to be those from the so-called "Hellenic" genealogy as found in the Hesiodic *Catalog of Women*. That text, however is neither the first, nor the only, nor the most recent, nor the most likely precedent for the genealogy of Xouthos which Euripides adapts. That honor belongs to Aeschylus' *Aetnaeae*, in which important claims of Xouthian identity were made in a play with, significantly, a strongly Dorian agenda (the celebration of Hieron's foundation of Aetna). According to its recently discovered and remarkable hypothesis, the *Aetnaeae* changed locations four times back and forth across this same region of eastern Sicily and even included an act set in Xouthia itself. Aeschylus' claims, however, in turn, were made against the backdrop of even earlier poetic assertions of Xouthos' identity, including not only the mainland genealogical perspective of the mid-sixth century *Catalog of Women*, but also local Sicilian genealogical traditions stretching back to Stesichorus and attempts by Greek adventurers to colonize the island at the beginning of the sixth century.

In other words, Euripides' transformation of Xouthos' genealogy for ethno-military ends during the Sicilian Expedition was not so much a radically new kind of operation as a just another, rather late link in a long chain of similarly motivated reinterpretations. All this is not to say that there were not other ideological forces at work behind Euripides' dramaturgy in the *Ion*, but if we treat Xouthos the same as we treat Doros and Ion and assume that the genealogical assertions and revisions of all three represent Athenocentric ideology and claims of military and ethnic superiority, then we discover that not only did Euripides' *Ion* draw just as much on the earlier counter-claims of Aeschylus' *Aetnaeae* and Stesichorus as it did on the mainland *Catalog* tradition, but also that the identity of Xouthos represented an ongoing poetic locus for contesting the ever-malleable identity of the fertile plains of eastern Sicily.