

“*Lysistrata* or *Diallagai*” and the post-Sicilian Crisis

At the entrance of *Diallagē*, the naked figure of Reconciliation, the scholiast to *Lysistrata* observes (at 1114) that the whole play was also called *Diallagai*, “from this part.” He is probably right about the tag that editors gave but wrong about the reason. To be sure, “reconciliation” describes the action at the end of the play, where Athenians and Spartans bargain over the body of *Diallagē*. But play titles in the plural usually name the chorus (not just an act or idea). If the choruswomen were called *Diallagai*, that title describes a role best portrayed in the agon where they join in defeating the Proboulos. For the audience would recognize the proposals that the women defend as *diallagai*, such as the Athenians had rejected after the Sicilian disaster.

Wrapped in the wool-working metaphor, *Lysistrata*’s program (567-86) is a grand scheme for reconciling Attica, her colonies and cleruchies, possibly joined by Ionian allies in isopoliteia. *Atimoi* will regain their rights but partisan troublemakers must be held accountable. This package is often treated as a diversion, incidental to the theme of peace with Sparta. But the Proboulos has asked, “how to resolve tangled affairs in the territories” (τετραραγμένα πράγματα ... ἐν ταῖς χώραις καὶ διαλῦσαι), and the audience would probably think of quarrels within the empire, inevitably involving colonists and cleruchs, some with dubious claims to citizenship at Athens and a problematic position in their adopted communities (cf. the situation in 378/7, *IG* ii² 43, ἐν τ[α]ῖς τῶν συμμάχων χώραις).

Much of this fantasy *diallagai* would later come true. After the defeat at Aigospotamoi in 405, Patrokleides’ decree called for the cancellation of past liabilities (excepting some of the 400); and (in the same year) the franchise was granted to loyal Samians. The Reconciliation of 403 set a limitation on past liabilities, balanced by accountings for the leadership on both sides (*Ath. Pol.* 38-9). In later variations we find a similar tradeoff of guarantees and limited remedies, sometimes sealed with the same pledge, “not to recall wrong” (*mē mnēsikakein*; *IG* ii² 111 of 362); cf. Carawan (2002); *contra* Joyce (2008).

Such proposals must have been debated and rejected in the year or so leading up to the play. There is testimony from Philochoros (*FGrH* 328 F 137) and Didymos (Marcell. *vita Thuc* 32.) that the Athenians indeed adopted a measure for solidarity in 413/12, but a feeble one (thus Jacoby [1954] 509, favored by Harding [2008] 132). They recalled their exiles (with the usual exceptions), apparently excluding those accursed for their role in the Mysteries scandal, especially Alcibiades (Thuc. 8.70). Thucydides also indicates (8.1) no reprieve for instigators of the disaster and no measure for rapprochement with disaffected allies: the Athenians tightened their belts and decided to tough it out. In sum, they seem to have adopted the one expedient that *Lysistrata* leaves out and rejected all the other measures that she demands—only to be driven to them in desperation as the war winds down.

Finally, this reading suggests another dimension to the Proboulos’ response at 590, when *Lysistrata* mentions the sons that mothers had lost: μὴ μνησικακίης. This is usually construed as a moral rebuke: simply “don’t bear a grudge” (e.g. Henderson [1987], *ad loc.*). But that misses the irony: the hardliner rejects the reconciliation that *Lysistrata* has offered but then, in defeat, he falls back on the standard closing to just such *diallagai*.

References:

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