

THE FLAMMENTOD OF HERAKLES IN SOPHOKLES' *TRACHINIAI*

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INTRODUCTION

The extant literature concerned with the death of Herakles can be categorized into four groups, if we exclude Sophokles' *Trachiniai*:

- (1) the tradition that does not question the method and the nature of his death, but simply tells of the mortality of Herakles. (e.g. Homer, *Iliad*, XVIII; *Odyssey*, XI.)
 - (2) the tradition that tells that he was killed by a poisoned robe that Deianeira gave to him. (e.g. Hesiod, fr. 25)
 - (3) the tradition that tells that he burnt himself, but does not question the reason. (e.g. Herodotos, VII, 198; Apollodoros, II, vii, 7)
 - (4) the tradition that tells that he burnt himself in order to do away with physical pain. (cf. Sophokles, *Philoctetes*, 802)
- Sophokles' *Trachiniai*, however, does not exactly coincide with any of these traditions. His Herakles does not actually arrange his death when he wants to die out of physical pain, but orders his Flammentod on Mt. Oita only when he realises that Zeus' oracle which he has long known tallies with the fact that he is now being killed by the poisoned robe prescribed by Nessos. It is manifest that Sophokles intended to make the fulfilment of Zeus' oracle the essential motive for Herakles' Flammentod.

Why, then, did the fulfilment of Zeus' oracle made Herakles order his Flammentod? Recently critics have enthusiastically argued about why Sophokles included the motif of Flammentod in the play, but it can be said that they have not tried to question seriously why Herakles arranges his Flammentod at the moment when he realises that it was Nessos who caused his current dying agony *1. It is, of course, important to investigate Sophokles' intention of introducing the motif of Flammentod or Zeus' purpose in a dimension beyond characters' psychology *2, but we may misunderstand the play if we try to find out the meaning of Sophokles' introduction of the motif of the Flammentod without looking at its

motivation in the level of characters' mind; because it is a theatrical drama.

Any audience, ancient or modern, whatever legend they may know concerning the death of Herakles, cannot be satisfied without asking why Herakles arranges his Flammentod on Mt. Oita only when he hears the name of Nessos. It is hard to think that Sophokles gave no hint as to this question.

I will try to see what Sophokles meant by his treatment of Flammentod motif, through an attempt to understand how he motivated Herakles' order of his Flammentod. This argument will lead to a new understanding of the whole play.

The Greek text I use is:
P.E.Easterling, *Sophocles, Trachiniae*, 1982.

THE EXISTING THEORIES AND THEIR FALLACY

Many critics have tried to see what Sophokles meant in the exodos by describing Herakles' change of mood and his order of Flammentod that take place soon after he hears the name of Nessos. Some of them argued that the introduction of the motif of Flammentod hinted at Herakles' apotheosis which was not explicitly mentioned in the play: C.M.Bowra thought that the allusion to an apotheosis would lead the audience to conclude "all is well" *3; C.Segal argues that it symbolises Herakles' elevation from bestiality to civilisation and his remoteness *4; H.Lloyd-Jones maintains that Sophokles' intention is to imply Zeus' purpose of his apotheosis *5. Some others regard the lack of any mention of apotheosis as significant and believe that Sophokles suppressed it intentionally: H.D.F.Kitto thought that Herakles' insensitive order of Flammentod represented his disregard for others, and that the suppression of the apotheosis by Sophokles supported his view that the arrogant Herakles was brought low by Dike for punishment *6; C.H. Whitman argued that in the exodos Sophokles, in order to make Deianeira a lonely and 'real' heroine, made Herakles a foil for her both by describing him as a selfish husband who had no sympathy for his wife but cared solely for the arrangement of his own death on the one

hand, and by depriving him of the glory of apotheosis on the other hand *7; A.Dain and P.Mazon, and C.Segal see that Herakles knows nothing about his future apotheosis, and argue that his heroic endurance can be seen in his will to forbear the pains of Flammentod, without any hope for the future *8. B.M.W.Knox's view is similar, but is not preoccupied with the question of apotheosis, though in no intensive argument: He rightly writes that the last moments of Herakles on stage show us the superhuman strength of will, the irresistible energy that had enabled the hero to perform his famous labours *9. P.E.Easterling acknowledges Sophokles' intention of alluding to the apotheosis, but maintains that the apotheosis is not the main subject of the exodos nor of the play; the emphasis of the action is on suffering and mortality of Herakles *10.

That those critics have argued about the exodos without looking carefully at the motivation of Herakles' order of Flammentod is remarkable. I.M.Linforth is a rare student who has tried to trace the motivation of Herakles' orders in the exodos. As for his order of Flammentod, he starts the argument by pointing out rightly that we are not supposed to suspect that there was a third oracle which instructed Herakles to burn himself, and that the Flammentod is an event which would contravene the oracle of Zeus that he would be killed by someone dead *11. On this basis he believes that the motivation of Herakles' order of Flammentod (as well as of his order of Hyllos' marriage) is completely obscure, and concludes that the exodos is an "afterpiece for the sake of the obligation of history" of the play, which is meant to connect the main body of the play, that is the tragedy of Deianeira, and the legends of Herakles and Herakleidae *12. His "afterpiece"-theory has been refuted rightly by many critics, but there has been no refutation of his view that Sophokles left the motivation of Herakles' order of Flammentod completely obscure.

A few critics have written something on this matter, but they virtually all agree that Herakles had known beforehand that his death had to be a Flammentod on Mt.Oita *13. That is to say, they presume that it is by Herakles' knowledge about the required prescription for his death which he got from Zeus' oracle that he orders and arranges his Flammentod. No passage in the play, however, suggests that he has had any

such knowledge. The play rather suggests the contrary. We must look at the passage in question.

As soon as Herakles knows that the robe which Deianeira sent to him has been prepared with the poison of Nessos, he proclaims that his death is near at hand, and summons his family with the intention that:

ὥς τελευταίαν ἐμοῦ 1149

φήμην πύθησθε θεσφάτων ὅσ' οἶδ' ἐγώ. 1150

"so that you may hear from me the last words—last words of as much oracles as I know."

"*hos' oid' egō*"(1150) implies that Herakles is going to reveal the last bit of the oracles he has ever known. What are the contents of the oracles he intends to reveal, then? To summarise, he tells thereafter:

"Long time ago Zeus told me that I would die by someone dead, which tallies with the fact that I am perishing now because of Nessos. Zeus has also given me another 'new oracle' that is coming out in agreement with that 'old oracle': it says that I am going to be released from toils at this present moment. This release from toils must imply death. As these things tally with each other clearly, my son, you must obey me, your father..... Bring me to the summit of Mt.Oita, make a pyre, put me on it and light it for me.... "(1152-1202)

It is evident that two pieces of information shown here as 'the old oracle' and 'the new oracle' are at least the oracles that Herakles knows, but there is nothing else that is shown manifestly as oracle at all.

It is true that, before he orders the arrangement of Flammentod, Herakles elaborately makes his son, Hyllos, swear by Zeus that he will obey the commandments of Herakles(1181-90). But when the son shows a sign of reluctance in helping his father's Flammentod, Herakles, wanting to attain Flammentod, tries to persuade him by his own argument(1209) and makes a sort of threat(1211) *14, but he does not quote the name of Zeus as an authority to justify his order. The only authority Herakles exercises in order to influence his son is that of father.(1178) These facts suggest that Herakles knows no oracle concerning his own Flammentod nor any authoritative prescription for his death *15. We are expected to understand that the oracles which Herakles was going to reveal are nothing more than the two: 'the old oracle' and 'the new oracle'.

As Linforth points out, if we refrain from saying a 'quibble', we must say that, when Herakles contemplates Flammentod, he is going to contravene Zeus' oracle that he would die by someone dead.*16 If we follow this view, we are right to say that Herakles' principle is not just to act to meet the requirements of oracles. Now we find it more difficult to hold that Herakles is following some oracle when he orders his Flammentod. We had better do away with this common assumption of many critics.

DEATH OF HERAKLES' OWN CHOICE

Let us assume that Flammentod on Mt.Oita is not prescribed for Herakles by any oracle. Then what makes him order it? The simplest alternative explanation might be that Flammentod is proposed by Herakles himself when he finds the two oracles tally with his present situation. But is this view acceptable and suggested by Sophokles? I will examine the matter through answering two questions:

Question A: Why does Herakles decide on dying an active death (that is Flammentod) when he finds the two oracles and his present situation tally with each other? *17

Question B: Why does Herakles choose the method of burning himself on Mt.Oita for his death?

Before answering question A, it will help if we clarify the meaning of the "coming out in agreement" of the two oracles and the present situation of Herakles *18.

ταῦτ' οὖν ἐπειδὴ λαμπρὰ συμβαίνει, τέκνον, 1174

δεῖ σ' αὐτὸ γενέσθαι τῷδε τάνδρῃ σύμμαχον 1175

"Since these things [i.e. the two oracles and the present situation of Herakles] are clearly tallying with each other, my son, you must lend me your aid...."

Herakles' cause to force his son to help him should be understood to be that now at the same time 'the old oracle' (*prophanton palai*:1159 and *lois palai*:1165) that Herakles would be killed by someone dead (1160f.) is tallying with the fact that he is now perishing because of the intrigue of Nessos, and 'the new oracle' (*manteia kaina*:1165) that at this

present moment he would be released from toils(1169-71) is tallying with the fact that he is now going to be released from toils by death(1172f.). The idea of tallying is stressed by the frequent usage of it: *symbainonta* at 1164, *xynēgora* at 1165 and *symbainci* at 1174. In short Herakles is meaning that his motive for forcing his son is what he gets to know only when he finds the two oracles and the present situation tally with each other. That is to say, his cause is that he has long been destined, with the approval of Zeus, to die at that moment *19. Therefore I modify question A as follows: Question A (modified): Why does Herakles decide on dying an active death only when he finds that he has long been destined by Zeus to die at that moment?

One thing is clear: If Herakles dies an active death before he dies from the poison, he can at least avoid the humiliation of dying in the way Nessos planned. And if he does not do it, he has to remain in a state of humiliation, being unable to stand up or move his own body and suffering severe physical pain occasionally, and, according to 'the old oracle' of Zeus, only to die soon from the poison just as Nessos planned initially. It is not difficult to think that Herakles, in such a situation, chooses to die an active death in order to avoid the expected humiliation.

Herakles does not, however, want to die such a death until he realises that he is destined to die now. It is true that he has expressed the wish to die several times before he finds the destiny of his death, but we must note that he expressed the wish only at the occasions of spasm of physical pain *20.

All through this time, he must have been suffering also from mental pain such as humiliation, dishonour, disappointment and despair: He has been reduced to a state of humiliation in which he does not want anybody to see him (786-90, 799f.); he regards himself as vanquished by a mere single woman (1063); and he has been made to roar "like a girl" (1071f.) while he had always been without a sigh (*astenaktos*:1074f.) in the evils. However, he did not wish to die except when he was tormented by the spasm of physical pain *21.

The Messenger reports that when Herakles was tormented by the first fit of physical pain, he killed Lichas without listening to the other's apology (772-82). It shows us the insanity and ferocity of Herakles in extreme physical pain. In the same report he also tells that Herakles, after a while,

still in a dreadful condition, said to his son:

ὦ παῖ, πρόσσελθε, μὴ φύγηις τοῦμόν κακόν, 797
μηδ' εἴ σε χρή θανόντι συνθανεῖν ἐμοί· 798

"O son, draw near; do not fly from my trouble, even though thou must share my death." (Jebb)

These words of Herakles imply that he was aware that he might lose control of himself at any time and harm his own son. Both episodes of this report suggest that the extreme physical pain makes Herakles mad. And the mad Herakles would be no Herakles. Every time the physical pain slackens, he wants to punish Deianeira. It all suggests that what Herakles wants, while he is dominated by the sense of honour, is retribution, not self-destruction.

We can suppose some reasons why sane Herakles did not want to die, although he could avoid the humiliation by dying some active death if he liked.

(1) Aias of Sophokles knew that if he died in a combat with Trojans, it would delight his enemies (*Aias* 469f.). And after his suicide his wife, Tekmessa, feared that his enemies might rejoice at his death. (961-73) For a person (in a non-Christian world) who has an enemy, it is natural enough to think that if he dies by any means, his enemy will rejoice *22. Herakles may well have disliked the idea of delighting the enemies by his own death, irrespective of how it may be performed.

(2) We can see how strongly Herakles wanted to punish Deianeira at 1107-11:

ἀλλ' εὐ γέ τοι τόδ' ἴστε, κἄν τὸ μηδὲν ὦ, 1107
κἄν μηδὲν ἔρπω, τήν γε δράσασαν τάδε 1108
χειρώσομαι κακ τῶνδε· προσμόλοι μόνον, 1109
ἴν' ἐκδιδαχθῇ πᾶσιν ἀγγέλλειν ὅτι 1110
καὶ ζῶν κακοῦς γε καὶ θανὼν ἐτεισάμην. 1111

"But you may be sure of one thing: —though I am as nought, though I cannot move a step, yet she who has done this deed shall feel my heavy hand even now: let her but come, and she shall learn to proclaim this message unto all, that in my death, as in my life, I chastised the wicked." (Jebb)

Line 1111 shows us particularly that Herakles was preoccupied with the idea of punishing his wife and was accordingly indifferent even to the fact that he was mortally injured. It is reasonable that, wanting desperately to punish his wife, he

had no wish to die as long as he was thinking that she was alive.

(3) Let us remember that we are assuming that Herakles decides on dying an active death because he has realised that he has long been destined by Zeus to die at that present moment. Then, if we examine the conditions of Herakles before he realises the destiny of his death, we can see what it is that restrains sane Herakles from wishing to die. Until he realises the destiny of his death, his belief is that he is not destined by Zeus to die soon but to live a happy life now that he has survived the dangerous time. (1171, cf. 81, 168) In this belief, he must think that it would be against Zeus' will for him to die by any means and that such a death could not be regarded as motivated by Zeus but by someone else. It may seem that if he dies an active death in order to avoid the humiliation, it is Herakles himself who motivates the death; but he is already influenced by the giver of the humiliation when he dies to avoid it: Such a death can be regarded as motivated by the giver of the humiliation. To Herakles it must be nothing but dishonour to die a death which is motivated by Deianeira *23. In short, until he realises the destiny of his death, Herakles can see no chance that any active death will save him perfectly from dishonour. It is quite natural that in such conditions Herakles does not wish to die. By letting Herakles order Flammentos soon after he realised the destiny, Sophokles must have meant particularly to imply that it was Herakles' concern about dishonour that restrained him from wishing to die. (End of (3))

This last argument invites us to think also about the conditions of Herakles after he realises the destiny of his death. Once he realises that he has long been destined by Zeus to die at that present moment, his condition is like this: If he dies now in accordance with destiny, his death will be regarded as motivated by Zeus; and if additionally he avoids dying in the way that his enemy planned, his death can no longer be regarded as motivated by the enemy. It suggests that Herakles now wishes to die an active death because he can now die not by his enemy (who is now Nessos) but by Zeus' destiny.

That Herakles does not refuse to obey Zeus is already suggested by Sophokles in the play: Lichas has told that Herakles served Omphale with patience after Zeus sold him to

her as a punishment of his murder of Iphitos (251, 275) *24. That Herakles is pious and respectful to Zeus is shown in some passages that describes him holding a ceremony of thanksgiving to Zeus at Kenaion (237f. 750ff. 993ff.)*25.

All these arguments made in response to question A suggest that Herakles, with reason, chooses to die for the first time when he has realised the destiny of his death.

FLAMMENTOD

The last argument has clarified that Herakles can avoid the humiliation of "perishing by the enemy" if he dies at a specific time by any method except that which the enemy designed. The things to ask now is:

Question B: Why does Herakles choose the method of burning himself on Mt.Oita for his death?

In order to answer this question, we must examine the meaning of his "burning himself on Mt.Oita". What Herakles prescribes Hyllos to do is, in short, to burn him on a pyre made of oak and olive at the summit of Mt.Oita.(1195-9) If we consider the fact that Herakles decides on dying an active death because he has realised that he has been destined by Zeus to die at that moment, we can sense the importance of another relationship that the Flammentod at Mt.Oita entails between Herakles and Zeus. First of all Herakles calls Mt.Oita in association with Zeus at 1191: *Oitēs Zēnos*. Secondly he has already shown oak tree to be "mouthpiece of Zeus" at 1168. Thirdly, some of Herakles' words suggest that the oak and olive which are to constitute his pyre should be aboriginal of Mt.Oita *26. And lastly and the most significantly we can think about the weather of Mt.Oita. As this mountain belongs to Zeus, it is natural to think that it is Zeus who controls the weather of this place. It is true that Sophokles wrote nothing about weather as something under the control of this god; but we may suppose that control of weather is the first thing that Zeus can do in order to influence Herakles' Flammentod, if we consider that weather is an important factor that can influence the state of burning of a pyre *27. At least, we are right to suppose that Zeus is

able to influence Herakles' Flammentod either by controlling the weather or any other way. We are invited to think about Zeus' reaction to Herakles' Flammentod for it is going to take place at "Mt.Oita of Zeus" and Zeus is Herakles' father. In fact Zeus' attitude to Herakles' suffering matters much to Hyllos, as is seen at 1266-9. Zeus may do nothing for his son when the latter is being burnt in his territory; but even in that case we would be able to see a reaction of Zeus: we would sense either his *agnomosynē* (want of feeling: 1266), with Hyllos, or his approval of Flammentod. In prescribing Flammentod Herakles is apparently expecting the latter.

These points show us that Herakles prescribes Hyllos to burn him on the pyre that consists of Zeus' woods, at a place sacred to Zeus, expecting Zeus' approval of this deed. This fact suggests that by choosing the method of Flammentod at Mt.Oita Herakles intends to relate his death with Zeus in the level of its execution. We have already known that Herakles is welcoming the idea that the death which he is going to die was initially motivated by Zeus. We suppose that Herakles wishes to make Zeus the cause of his death in the level of its execution as well as in the level of its initial motivation. That is to say, he wishes to die purely and exclusively by Zeus. In order to verify this view, we must ask why.

It was a natural feeling for Greek fighters that a death by a brave man or a god is preferable to a death by a worthless man *28. We can easily understand that Herakles, who does not refuse to obey Zeus and is pious enough to hold a ceremony of thanksgiving as we have seen above, prefers dying by Zeus to dying by any other cause.

These arguments explain why Herakles chooses the method of burning himself at Mt.Oita. Now that question A and question B have been answered, we can rightly say that it is Herakles himself who proposes Flammentod. As is seen above, this view is also suggested by Sophokles in many respects.

MENTAL ENDURANCE OF HERAKLES

We have so far seen the motivation that Sophokles gave to Herakles' orders of Flammentod. Let us turn our eyes now to

Sophokles' intention behind it.

Although Deianeira had a chance of making an apology for what she had done to Herakles, she killed herself because "she could not bear to live in disgrace." (721f.) She had a keen sense of honour, but was a vulnerable and weak person who could not bear to wait until she would correct people's misunderstanding of her and defend her honour. (cf. 727f. 813f.) Sophokles' Aias, too, decided on killing himself because he had lost all hope of keeping his honour, although he must have been aware that his suicide would involve another humiliation as we have seen above *29. Most of those who wish to kill themselves in Greek Tragedy, including Aias and Deianeira, are not particular whether their death is approved by some god or not, about the possibility of suffering new humiliation or dishonour that the suicide would involve, or to live to revenge themselves; even if their motive is the sense of honour *30. Man cannot indeed be particular about these matters, unless, at the same time, he has both a keen sense of honour and mental endurance (that enables him to bear the pain felt by his sense of honour) *31. People may well expect that Herakles, too, wishes to die either in order to escape from the mental pain such as the present humiliation, dishonour, disappointment and despair, or to avoid the humiliation of perishing by the poisoned robe, or both. Sophokles, however, did not make him do this.

In this play both Deianeira and Herakles have a keen sense of honour, but there is a great contrast between the case of Deianeira where she does not endure ill reputation and the case of Herakles where he endures all the mental pain that he feels as long as his physical condition allows it *32. This contrast shows us the mark of Herakles, namely the combination of keen sense of honour and mental endurance *33.

If we see this play in this light, we find it significant that Herakles' mental endurance enabled him to bear the servitude to Eurystheus for twelve years (35, 825, 1049) and that exactly that experience gave him a chance to perform his twelve labours which are the crown and symbol of the mythical Herakles. (cf. 1011f., 1058-61, 1091-100) No matter how strong he was physically, the twelve labours could not have been accomplished if he had not had enough mental endurance to bear the long servitude.

It is true that Sophokles described Herakles as a husband

who was selfish, disloyal to his wife, and full of disregard for others, far from a perfect hero. But he made Herakles a man who refused to die any death unless it was motivated by Zeus; even in the agony, both mental and physical, which the poisoned robe brought about to him. By putting Herakles in a disaster full of humiliation, Sophokles must have intended to show us one aspect of his essence, mental endurance.

NOTES

*1 A typical example of negligence of questioning the matter seriously is found in H.Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus*, 1971, 127f., where he confuses these two questions.

*2 *ibid.*, 128; M.S.Silk, "Heracles and Greek Tragedy", *G&R* 32 (1985), 11.

*3 C.M.Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy*, 1944, 160.

*4 C.Segal, "Sophocles' Trachiniae: Myth, Poetry and Heroic Values", *YCS* 25 (1977), 140 *et passim*.

*5 *op.cit.*, 128.

*6 H.D.F.Kitto, *Greek Tragedy*, 1955, 296; *Poiesis*, 1966, ch. 4.

*7 C.H.Whitman, *Sophocles, A Study of Heroic Humanism*, 1951, 119f..

*8 A.Dain and P.Mazon, *Sophocle, I*, 1955, 9; C.Segal, *op.cit.*, 140.

*9 B.Knox, "A Review on Ronnet, *Sophocle, Poète tragique*", *AJP* 92 (1971), — *Word and Action*, 1979, 187.

*10 P.E.Easterling, *Sophocles, Trachiniae*, 1982, 10.

*11 I.M.Linforth, "The Pyre on Mount Oeta in Sophocles'

Trachiniae", UCPCP 14 (1951), 258f.

*12 *ibid.*, 262, 266.

*13 *ibid.*, 265; Segal, *op.cit.*, 140; Easterling, *op.cit.*, ad 1193-9. Lloyd-Jones, *op.cit.*, 127f. also suggests this view. Linforth's account contradicts itself in this respect.

*14 This passage has always been taken to imply Herakles' concession to Hyllos, but it appears somewhat strange if he concedes so easily. I would take this passage as a threat, a sign of Herakles' impatience: Herakles is proposing his son to disobey him and be disowned. cf. 1204f.

*15 I view that Herakles knows no oracle concerning Hyllos' marriage, either; but I do not deal with this problem here, for that argument is not so essential to the understanding of the play as the current one.

*16 Linforth, *op.cit.*, 258; pace T.H.Hoey, "Causality and the *Trachiniae*", *CJ* 68 (1973). The two starting point of Linforth's argument that I have shown above are both right and important. The second reinforces the first as I argued just now, and the first gives us a possibility of a new interpretation of the play as we will see below.

*17 It is difficult to term Herakles' Flammentod as suicide. cf. H.Aigner, *Selbstmord im Mythos*, 1980, 83. By 'active death' I mean any death that one inflicts upon oneself in either level of its initial motivation or of its execution.

*18 For the wording "coming out in agreement", see Easterling, *op.cit.*, ad 1164. I hold that "*lampra symbainet*" at 1174 means more than just "are clearly borne out", which Easterling, *op.cit.*, ad loc. suggests. "*symbainont' isa*" at 1164 bears the meaning not only of tallying with each other, but also of agreement of the oracles with the present situation, because it is through this agreement that the two oracles tally with each other. This fact suggests that *symbainet* at 1174 still bears the sense of agreement of two oracles with the present situation.

*19 That Herakles at 1143-6 repeatedly expresses his realisation of the destiny of his death as soon as he becomes aware of Nessos' intreague suggests that he is so shocked to know the fact strangely from the tallying of the oracles and his present situation.

*20 1004-6, 1013-7, 1031-6, 1040-3 and 1081-8. All these passages include acute screams of Herakles.

*21 We should see here Herakles' fortitude rather than the limitations of his physical endurance.

*22 At 1133 Herakles is chagrined at the suicide of Deianeira, but it should be regarded as an exceptional case.

*23 Tekmessa says at Aias 970:

θεοῖς τέθνηκεν οὗτος, οὐ κείνοισιν, οὔ. 970

It is difficult to translate this line into any other language, but the implied meaning is, as Jebb, *Sophocles, Ajax*, 1896, *ad loc.* suggests, "His death has been brought about by the gods", or "Ajax is the gods' victim, surely not theirs", as Stanford, *Sophocles, Ajax*, 1963, *ad* 970 quotes Pearson. Tekmessa is stressing that Aias died by gods and denying that he died by the enemies. It shows that even a veritable suicide such as Aias' could be regarded by Greeks as motivated by someone other than the subject of suicide.

*24 It is true that the Messenger denies some part of Lichas' report, but the motivation of his servitude which Lichas told is not denied by him (351-74).

*25 The attitude of Herakles who accepts to die if it is motivated by Zeus is very similar to the people's attitude to suicide at the time of Sokrates (i.e. late fifth century B.C.) which Platon, *Phaidon*, 62C 7f. described as "one should not kill oneself until gods send some necessity";, although the former has nothing to do with the Phytagorean doctrine which Sokrates suggests to be the basis of the latter.

*26 Herakles' description of oak tree at 1195 is "deep-rooted", which suggests its vital connection with Mt.Oita as its foundation. The indication of wild olive at

1197 suggests that it must be the olive that has been raised by nobody but the nature of Mt.Oita.

*27 Bacchylides, 3,37-62 and Euripides in *Alkmene* made Zeus extinguish the fire of a pyre and interrupt Flammentod. Herodotos, I,87 gave an example of rain that extinguishes the fire of a pyre to save Kroisos. Cf. T.C.W.Stinton, "The Apotheosis of Heracles from the pyre", *Papers given at the Colloquium in Honour of Winnington-Ingram*, 1987. For Homer's Zeus as a figure who controls the weather, see *Iliad* XVII 645ff. As many Homeric epithets of Zeus show, Zeus was traditionally associated with the control of weather.

*28 Homer's Achilles prefers being killed by the best of Trojans, Hektor, to being killed by the river Skamandros personified (cf. the river Acheloos in the *Trachiniae*!) and to that prefers being killed by Apollon's arrow (*Iliad*, XXI, 278ff.). Sophokles' Tekmessa does not want to admit that Aias was killed by the enemies but the gods, although she has no means to prove it (*Aias*, 970). Euripides, *Supplikes*, 934f. showed us that the corpse of Kapaneus who was burnt by Zeus' fire (lightning) was regarded as purified (*hieron*), and given a respectful treatment of burial in a sanctuary.

*29 Deianeira's decision to kill herself is often compared to that of Aias. cf. K.Reinhardt, *Sophokles*, 1933, 58; G.M.Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama*, 1958, 115; Stanford, *op.cit.*, ad.473. Stanford is aware that Aias was vulnerable to others' censure and laughter. (xxxiiif.)

*30 e.g. Sophokles' *Philoktetes*, *Antigone*, *Haimon*; Euripides' *Herakles* (*Mainomenos*), *Megara*, *Phaidra*, etc.

*31 Homer's Achilles who cancels suicide in order to revenge Patroklos certainly belongs to this category. cf. *Iliad*, XVIII.

*32 Sophokles described Herakles' shamelessness in the episode of "drunken Herakles" at 268. It may suggest that his sense of honour was different from that of the civilised Greeks, but it is not enough to negate the image of Herakles with keen sense of honour. Sophokles must have intended to

suggest Herakles' mental endurance that enabled him to live withstanding humiliation and dishonour. cf.

R.P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles, An Interpretation*, 1980, 85.

*33 Besides Sophokles' Herakles there are some other heroes in Greek Literature who endure dishonour and humiliation: e.g. Homer's Odysseus, Sophokles' Oidipous and Euripides' Herakles (at the ending of *Herakles Mainomenos*); but only Euripides' Herakles can be compared to Sophokles' in that the endurance of both heroes come from their sense of honour. However, the endurance of the former is considerably different from that of the latter: Euripides' Herakles endures mental pains that come from his inside: i.e. the disgrace of having killed his children and wife in derangement, and the grief caused by their loss; while Sophokles' endures the humiliation that he thinks to have come purely from other human beings. Additionally, Euripides did not emphasise Herakles' self-respect and vindictiveness, but made him a hero vulnerable to disgrace who contemplated suicide until Theseus dissuaded him, and made no mention of his servitude. cf. My forthcoming article "Indignity, Despair and other Ills in *Herakles Mainomenos*."