Antioch Mosaics and their Mythological and Artistic Relations with Spanish Mosaics

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The twenty-two myths represented in Antioch mosaics repeat themselves in those in Hispania. Six of the most famous are selected: Judgment of Paris, Dionysus and Ariadne, Pegasus and the Nymphs, Aphrodite and Adonis, Meleager and Atalanta and Iphigenia in Aulis.

Key words: Antioch myths, Hispania, Judgment of Paris, Dionysus and Ariadne, Pegasus and the Nymphs, Aphrodite and Adonis, Meleager and Atalanta, Iphigenia in Aulis

During the Roman Empire, Hispania maintained good cultural and economic relationships with Syria, a Roman province that enjoyed high prosperity. Some data should be enough. An inscription from Málaga, lost today and therefore from an uncertain date, seems to mention two businessmen, *collegia*, from Syria, both from Asia, who might form an single college, probably dedicated to sea commerce. Through Cornelius Silvanus, a *curator*, they dedicated a gravestone to patron Tiberius Iulianus (D'Ors 1953: 395). They possibly exported salted fish to Syria, because Málaca had very big salting factories (Strabo III.4.2), which have been discovered.

In Córdoba, possibly during the time of Emperor Elagabalus, there was a Syrian colony that offered a gravestone to several Syrian gods: Allath, Elagabab, Phren, Cypris, Athena, Nazaria, Yaris, Tyche of Antioch, Zeus, Kasios, Aphrodite Sozausa, Adonis, Iupiter Dolichenus. They were possible traders who did business in the capital of Bética (García y Bellido 1967: 96-105). Libanius the rhetorical (*Declamatio*, 32.28) praises the rubbles from Cádiz, which he often bought, as being good and cheap. As Libenius lived in Antioch (4th century B.C.), this piece of information proves that fish from Cádiz was being sold in Antioch.

This paper compares some myths in Antioch mosaics with its corresponding Hispanic ones, laying down its parallels and its differences.

Judgement of Paris

The Judgement of Paris is found in an Antioch mosaic (Figure 1), Atrium House (Levi 1947: 16-21, pl. I b; Cimok 2000: 28-31; Balty 1981: 361-362, pl. VIII), that dates from before the earthquake of the year 115 A.D., in a Hispania mosaic from Casariche, Seville, that dates from the 4th century A.D. (Figure 2) (Blázquez 1993: 421-422, Lancha 1997: 203-206; López Monteagudo 2010: 133-135), and in a third one from Noheda (Cuenca). The scene in both mosaics is completely different, as well as its style.

In the Antioch mosaic, young Paris, dressed in Oriental fashion, sits on a rock on the left side. His hands cross and hold the *pedum*. He stares at Hermes, placed at his back as if looking for advice. The god wears winged sandals and has a *caduceus*. The cloak falls over the shoulders. The three goddesses are at the front. Hera sits in between Athena and Aphrodite, who are both standing. All three wear scepters on their shoulders. A high column holding a glass is in the middle. Tree branches surround the column and spread the leaves over the figures. Two birds are between the leaves. Rocks can be seen further away. A little winged Psyche, wrapped in a cloak and holding a torch, is on top of a rock. On the left is little Eros, who may have a scepter and stands on another column placed over the head of Hera. In front of him, the flock of Paris is small in size compared to the human figures. A stream flows below the rocks.

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The scene in the Casariche mosaic is completely different and of a higher quality. Paris sits at the right, looking at the three goddesses, who are standing in front of him. They dress in Oriental fashion and hold the apple with his raised right hand. The three goddesses are standing in frontal position and have halos around the head. The goddess closest to Paris is Aphrodite. A circular medallion hangs from her neck. A cloak held from the edges by the hand of the goddess hangs over the back and covers the legs. Hera and Athena hold an elongated scepter. They wear a long tunic with red clavis. The cloak hangs from the neck. A long transverse strip crosses over the legs. Athena covers her head with a crest helmet. She wears a long stola. A cloak covers her from the back and rolls itself around the left hand.

As Lancha points out, the model for this composition has an Eastern origin, as shown by the dresses, the liveliness of colours, and the illusionist style of the figures placed on a rocky scenery. The French researcher notes that Hera's dress is almost identical to that of Theogonis in the mosaic found in Nea Paphos.

The Judgement of Paris is also represented in a mosaic found in Noheda (Cuenca) that dates from the late 4th century A.D. Paris sits on a throne, with his legs opened by the cloak on the left side. Little Eros is at his feet. Only his legs are preserved, which are wrapped in a cloak. The three goddesses stand and look to the front: Aphrodite, Hera and Athena. The first two wear long tunics and a cloak, and Athena a peplos with a helmet on her head. This last goddess turns her head towards Paris (Lledó 2010: 129-131).

This myth is often represented in glass paintings and also on reliefs and paintings.

Figure 1 Judgment of Paris. Atrium House

Dionysus and Ariadne

The House of Dionysus and Ariadne is the name of a mosaic decorated with this myth (Levi 1947: 141-150, pls. XXVII-XXVIII; Cimok 2000: 124-128) that dates from the early 3rd century A.D. (Figure 3). Ariadne lays on a staggered rock. She wears a chiton and a himation and sandals on her feet. The wrists are adorned with bracelets. Dionysus stands at her side and gazes at her while she sleeps. He holds a thyrsus decorated with a pine cone. He wears a cloak that wraps itself around his left arm. A halo surrounds his head. In between both of them stands a winged and naked Eros. On the left side, a maenad stands on a pedestal against a wall. She wears a long chiton and is crowned by leaves. The falling left hand holds a cup.

On the right side stands a satyr, also against the wall. His chest and right arm are uncovered. A cloak rolls up around his left arm. The hand holds a thyrsus. A crown of leaves girds the head. The right hand holds a cup. The back of the scene is in front of an architectonic decoration that forms a triptych.

The busts of Dionysus and Ariadne are represented in the House of the Sun-Dial (Cimok 2000: 191).

A mosaic with the same myth dating from around 400 A.D. (Figure 4) was found in the capital of Lusitania, Augusta Emerita (Blanco 1952: 44-49: Id., 1978: 34, pl. 26 A; Álvarez Martínez 2001: 140-141; Dunbabin 1999: 158, fig. 163; Guardia, 1992: 222-225, fig. 95). Dionysus, in a frontal position, holds a jar with his right hand and pours wine on the mouth of a panther, and a thyrsus with his left hand. Pan is in the center looking at the front. Ariadne is sound asleep next to a kantharos. She wears a cloak that leaves her body uncovered. In the middle is a satyr with outstretched arms over the nebris on the tunic.



Figure 2 Judgment of Paris. Casariche (Photo G. López Monteagudo)



On the upper part, in the left angle, stands the name of the artist: EX OFFICINA ANNI BONI. Apparently, the scene is stylistically somewhat careless in its execution of the figures. The background is full of circles, which are not documented in other Hispanic mosaics. Blanco states they are artistically refined. He writes on the subject:

At first glance, one would say a mosaic with such a rough painting has to be barbarian, the product of a local workshop, and made during a moment of little relationship between Roman provinces, as is the case during Ancient History. Mosaics somewhat similar to this one have been dated during the 4th century A.D., on the assumption that Art in general was undergoing a period of drought and decay, which some looked upon with disdain as a ruin of Antique Art, and others as prehistory of Medieval Art. Thanks to the interest of the latest generations in studying the 4th century A.D., we can now date during that century the mosaics of Orpheus in Zaragoza, Quintana del Marco (León), etc., which teach us what the style of the time was; the mosaic from Mérida hardly could belong to it. Its author, Annius Ponius, nowadays Anni Boni, treated the figures with a cheerful lack of concern, as if they were table leftovers that fell on white pavement, a genre that classical mosaists called *asáraton oíkos*. The shadows that rendered the bodies an appearance of volume before their time have disappeared from his paintings; the pleats of the clothes are reduced to schematic lines, as if

Figure 3 Dionysus and Ariadne. House of Dionysus and Ariadne. (Photo J. Cabrero) designed with a pen, a last consequence of the "grooves" of the late 3rd century A.D., and of the "onion pleats" of the 4th century A.D., that are well illustrated in the clothing of Orpheus in Zaragoza. The same distance we have observed in the treatment of the cloths, separates the panthers in both these mosaics: the skin of the Mérida panther is polka-dotted, with a little white dot in the middle, just like the one in Zaragoza; but, compared with this one for volume, it seems stiff and dead like a carpet.

And, nevertheless, in the environment of other mosaics that we will mention later on, the one from Mérida flaunts refined characters. The figure of Ariadne looks like a far reflection of Copt beauty that during the Lower Antiquity displaced classical nudity, as seen in the Ariadne from Baltimore. The new feminine beauty canon preferred slouch shoulders, a brief waist, round hips and short and sharp limbs. More loyal even to this Oriental canon is the winged figure of the Triumph of Dionysus from Tarragona. Ariadne sports furthermore the pyramidal headdress that was in vogue during the 4th century A.D., like one of the praying figures on the front of a sarcophagus from the Tobacco Factory in Tarragona, which offers us, by the way, a linear painting of apparel similar to the one in our mosaic. For his part, Dionysus wears a *tunic augusticlavia* and striped sandals, an outfit that has uncountable equivalences in paintings and mosaics from a very ancient period, as in the mosaics from Santa Maria Maggiore, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, etc. His face, with the eyebrows meeting in the middle,



Figure 4 Dionysus and Ariadne. Augusta Emerita. (Photo J. Cabrero)

matches up exceptionally with that of Ge in a mosaic from Beit Jibrin in Palestine, which can not be from earlier than the 4th century A.D., and finally the figure of Pan in our mosaic seems to be painted with a contemporary cardboard from another one of the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem from the late 5th century A.D. or early 6th century A.D. The paleographic characters in the inscription EX OFFICINA ANNI BONI also reveal a very early date. In between the classical letters, Annius Ponius slid more than one F that exceeds the upper line of the epigraph, a signal subsequent to the year 300 A.D., a belated P with decorations and several quite odd N letters. The manuscript of Saint Hilarius in the Vatican, dated before 510 A.D. thanks to the copyist (and therefore from not much earlier than this date), constitutes the only reference for the letters F in this inscription, which are identical in said manuscript.

Pegasus and the Nymphs

This myth decorates a mosaic in the House of the Boat of Psyches. It dates from the 3rd century A.D. The mosaic is quite damaged. Pegasus takes up the centre of the composition and rears up over a thicket in between two nymphs who are doing his toilette. The nymph at the left holds and directs him with the right arm, and her hand has its palm reaching towards the horse. The two nymphs stand looking ahead, as is the winged horse, which is adorned with a collar around the neck. The nymph at the left is placed in three-quarter perspective. She wears an embroidered tunic and a cloak that hangs from her right shoulder. She has her head crowned. The nymph at the right offers the horse some flowers and herbs in her cloak (Figure 5) (Levi 1947: 172-176, pl. XXXVIb). This mosaic dates from the 3rd century A.D.

In the Roman villa in Almenara de Adaja, Valladolid (Figure 6), a mosaic is also decorated with the toilette of Pegasus. The horse, as in the Antioch mosaic, takes up the centre, but is seen from the side and has a walking posture. It is also in between two nymphs. The one at the front holds the animal with a belt put around the neck. She is half-naked. The cloak only covers her hips and legs. The head, as well as that of her companion, is crowned with a bun surrounded by a diadem. A garland decorates the neck of the horse. At the back is a big glass with an ovoid main body, a high neck and a round and narrow mouth. The nymph at the right wears a long tunic and a cloak that hangs over her back. Her body is also seen from the side. She rubs the animal's hindquarter with her right hand and strokes the tail with the left hand. The horse is inside a puddle, as well as in the Antioch mosaic, where there is a thicket of aquatic plants, and in the Almenara de Adaja mosaic (Neira - Mañanes 1998: 29-34, pls. 11-12, 31-34). Isolated aquatic plants grow. A big difference between both images of Pegasus is that the Almenara de Adaja animal has no wings, unlike the specimen form Antioch, a unicum in the imagery of Pegasus. The Hispanic mosaic dates from the 4th century A.D. Another big originality in the Almenara de Adaja mosaic is that, above the toilette of Pegasus, there is the figure of a fountain that lies back on a rock, looking ahead, half-naked, with the cloak falling over the right shoulder and covering feet and hips. The wrists are decorated with bracelets and a necklace tightened around the neck. The right hand holds a lying amphora which pours water. The fountain is surrounded by aquatic plants and has been identified as the Hypocrene fountain.

There are two other known Hispanic mosaics with the toilette of Pegasus: the lost one from San Julián de la Valmuza, Salamanca, and a second one from Fuente Álamo, Puente Genil, Córdoba (López Monteagudo 2010: 141). In the



Figure 5 Pegasus and the Nymphs. House of the Boat of Psyche. (Photo J. Cabrero)

Figure 6 Toilette of Pegasus. Almenara de Adaja



mosaic from the Fuente Álamo villa that dates from the 2nd century A.D., a winged Pegasus, seen from the side, is offered a fruit basket by naked nymph. The scene is very original and slender.

The Pegasus and the nymphs mosaic from San Julián de Valmuza that also dates from the 4th century A.D., offers a huge novelty, which constitutes a *unicum*. There are three nymphs. One rides a winged Pegasus and is getting ready to crown it. The nymph at the left wears a long tunic that leaves her arms uncovered, and offers Pegasus a bowl. The nymph riding on Pegasus wears a long tunic as well. The nymph at the right caresses the hindquarter of the animal, which is in a walking posture. She wears a tunic and a cloak, which leaves the left leg uncovered. The three nymphs have the same kind of hairstyle, a skull cap with a wide rim (Blázquez 1993: 393-394; Id., 1982 a: 19-20, fig. 12).

Aphrodite and Adonis

The oldest Antioch mosaic with this myth was found in the Atrium House. It dates from before 115 A.D. and its upper part is lost. Both lovers chat amicably.



Figure 7 Aphrodite and Adonis. Atrium House.

They sit on two thrones (Figure 7). Adonis is naked. The goddess wears a chiton, a himation that covers her legs and a veil. She rests her feet on a footstool. Next to Adonis stands a dog that looks at the goddess (Levi 1947: 24-25, pl. IIa).

Adonis Parting is represented in The House of the Red Pavement (Levi 1947: 80-82; Cimok 2000: 62-63). A temple with two Corinthian columns and an olive tree in front of them appears at the left. Only two characters take part in the scene. One of them is a naked Adonis, who stands pensive, wearing a cloak that hangs from the left shoulder and covers his legs, and two long spears resting on his neck. The second character is Aphrodite, wearing a chiton and a cloak, with a veil over her head that falls on her shoulders. The right wrist is adorned with a big circular shield. A little winged Eros is in between them. Aphrodite's attitude is of dialogue, trying to persuade her lover to desist leaving for a hunt. This mosaic dates from the 2nd century A.D.

Two mosaics with Adonis Parting have been discovered in Hispania. Both of them date from the Lower Empire. In the mosaic from Andelos (Navarra), the scene takes place in front of a villa and a landscape with palm trees and other trees. A standing lady wears a long tunic, a palla and a cloak, and a necklace that decorates her neck. Her hair is combed in the shape of a helmet with a broad edge. She leans towards a matron in a finding attitude, resting her hand upon the forearm of the lady, who sits on a thronos decorated with big nails on its back, legs and seat. She parts her hair in the middle, which falls on both sides of the face. Her expression is that of a desolated woman, with her head leant to one side. She wears a tunic and a cloak. A diadem crowns her head and a necklace made of vitreous paste is placed around her neck. A veil falls over her shoulders and goes down to her knees. In front of her is a man who has his head covered with a cap. He has a beard and wears a fringed tunic. The cloak covers the left shoulder and the back. A man walks in front of him. Only his legs, wearing caligae bundled up to the middle of the calf, are preserved. He wears a cape. Also preserved are the legs of horse and those of a dog that turns his head. The man carries a spear. This scene represents Adonis Parting (Mezquíriz 2003: 228-229) and according to J. Balty, Fedra and a servant.

A second mosaic with the same myth, of which only a drawing is left over, was found in the harbour of Tarragona. The scene takes place in front of a building with columns.

A third scene with Adonis Parting to hunt comes from Arcos de la Frontera, Cádiz (Blázquez 1982 b: 50-51, pl. VII). The group, from left to right, is made of the feet of a male; the hindquarter of a horse; a naked male with spear and a cloak falling over his back; a naked young woman with a cloak that waves over her back and falls down to her knees, who holds a naked child; and finally, the front legs of a horse. The mosaic dates from the 4th century A.D. (Blázquez 1993: 418-420).

The hunter of the Villa of El Hinojal, near Augusta Emerita (Blázquez 2008: 28, fig. 22) (Figure 8), who spears a wild boar, has been interpreted, by comparison, to a mosaic from the House of Megalopsychia (Levi 1947: 28, fig. 28) with the



Figure 8 Adonis hunting a wild boar. El Hinojal. (Photo G. López Monteagudo)

same scene and a sign, as Adonis spearing the wild boar, which repeats itself in the already mentioned Carranque mosaic (fig. 18), in which Adonis is naked and accompanied by two dogs wounded by the bites of the beast (Fernández Galiano, 1994: 324, fig. 5). This last myth, the Death of Adonis, is unknown in Antioch mosaics.

Meleager and Atalanta

This myth from the 2nd century A.D. decorates the House of the Red Pavement (Levi 1947: 68-71, pl. XIa; Cimok 2000: 71-73). Three characters and the wild boar in between Atalanta at the left and Meleager at the right take part in the scene (Figure 9). Atalanta wears a sleeveless tunic and a sleeveless exomis. The cloak falls over her left shoulder and rolls up over her left arm, which points ahead. Atalanta, as well as her companions, wears high hunting boots. Meleager wears a tunic and a chlamys that covers the left shoulder and arm. Atalanta, at the right, turns her head towards Meleager with an expression of anguish.

Figure 9 Meleager and Atalanta. House of the Red Pavement. (Photo J. Cabrero)



Her attitude is similar to that of Meleager. The myth represents the fight for the Calydonian boar between Meleager, who has decided to dedicate it to her, and her uncles, the Thestiadae. The myth goes back to a tragedy by Euripides.

The mythological knowledge of the *domini* from the Houses of Antioch was large, as proved by the House of the Red Pavement, with mythological mosaics of Meleager and Atalanta; Faedra and Hippolitus; Io and Argos; Adonis Farewell, and Andromache and Astyanax (2) (Levi 1947: 68-69; Cimok 2000: 70-89); the House of the Triumph of Dionysus, The Abandoned Ariadne, The Sea Thiasos (Levi 1947: 91-104; Cimok 2000: 91-93). The House of the Boat of Psyche has the myths of Europe and the Bull, Pegasus and the Nymphs, Boat of Psyches, Bust of Thetis, Agros and Opera (Levi 1947: 167-191, Cimok 2000: 170-171). The House of Menander has mosaics representing the myths of Erotes, Narcissus, Menander and Glykere, Leda and the Swan, Eros and Psyche, Io and Argos or Paris and Demone, Apollo and Daphne, Oceanus and Thetis (Levi 1947: 168-216; Cimok 2000: 175-189).

Some houses in Hispania are decorated with several myths, as the already cited villa of Carranque with the myths of Diana and Actaeon, Amymone and Poseidon, Hylas and Nymphs, Pyramus and Thisbe (Blázquez 2008: 95-102, figs. 2-5; Lancha 1997: 164-166, pls. C, LXXII-LXXIII). An inscription from this villa is very important as it indicates how the work of the mosaics was done. Someone did the drawings, and somebody else made them. The name of the owner of the villa is also indicated.

The Wedding of Cadmus and Harmonia is represented in a mosaic from the villa of Azuara, Zaragoza. They are accompanied by the Olympian Gods, and several



Figure 10 Meleager and Atalanta. San Pedro del Arroyo

myths in the little pictures: Antiope, Dirce, Ismene, Antiope and her sons, Amphion and Zeus. These myths are not represented in Antioch mosaics. The houses of Antioch have generally more myths than Hispanic villas.

This myth can be found in two Hispanic mosaics. One was found in the Villa of Cardeñajimeno, Burgos, and dates from the 4th century A.D. (López Monteagudo - Navarro Sáez - Palol Salellas 1998: 21-28, pls. 35-37, fig. 5; Lancha 1997: 171-173, pl. LXXXV; Guardia 1992: 129-133, figs. 44-50).

In the Cardeñajimeno mosaic, the wild boar lies dead on the floor in front of Meleager and Atalanta. Meleager and Atalanta dress like heroes, with a naked torso, and the cloak falls over their backs and left arm and rolls up over Atalanta's leg. Both wear diadems on their heads, and Atalanta has also a necklace around her neck. Meleager holds a spear and a pitchfork with his left hand. With the right hand, he holds the reins of the horse. He turns his head slightly towards Atalanta. A young man smaller in size, possibly the *dominus* of the Villa, is at the right. This presence is a great novelty: the incorporation of the Villa *domini* to the myth.

In the already mentioned mosaic from El Olivar del Centeno, the *domini* join the *pompa triumphalis* as a satyr and maenad. This mosaic dates from the late 4^{th} century A.D.

Another mosaic with the myth of Meleager and Atalanta has been discovered in San Pedro del Arroyo (Figure 10), also dating from the 4th century A.D. The distribution of the figures and the movement of the stylistic composition are highly original. A notice placed in the shadow of a tree reads: "Storia Meleagri". A naked Meleager is in the centre of the composition. With the cloak thrown over his back, he spears a wild boar that stands on its back legs with the help of his dog, who attacks the wild boar behind the hero. The wild boar is being attacked on its stomach by another smaller dog. A small sized tree grows in the central lower part. A man who wears a long tunic and lifts a sword stands behind Meleager. A small horse walks in front of Meleager.

Atalanta, naked except for her left leg, which is covered by a cloak, is in the upper right corner, with an arch on her shoulder to help her companion. At her right, a third dog attacks the wild boar. In the upper corner, a little Eros stands naked, with a cloak over his back and raised arms. The myth is undoubtedly represented with great originality (Cabrero, in press).

Iphigenia in Aulis

This myth was represented in a mosaic of the House of Iphigenia. It dates from the Severan period. The scene represents the moment in which Iphigenia is incited by Clytemnestra to force Agamemnon to have mercy and desist on his determination to sacrifice her. Agamemnon is represented as an actor. He wears a chlamys and holds a scepter with his left hand, a symbol of royalty. He stretches his hand towards his daughter, who wears a tunic and a cloak that surrounds her body at the back and covers her head. The left hand is covered by the cloak. The building's facade has three Ionic columns. The one at the right rests on a high pedestal. Clytemnestra is in between this column and the middle one. A little Ionic building rises on the right side. It possibly symbolizes Agamemnon's tent on Greek land (Levi 1947: 120-126, pl. XXI) (Figure 11).

The myth is represented in an Emporion mosaic (Figure 12), the first colony founded by the Greeks in Hispania shortly after 600 A.C. The scene takes part in front of a tent with wide curtains at the back. It is the Sacrifice of Iphigenia.



Figure 11 Iphigenia in Aulis. House of Iphigenia. (Photo G. López Monteagudo)

The altar and cylindrical foliage are at the front. A naked Camillus turns his back at the right side of the altar. The five most important characters are at the back, surrounding the altar. They are, from left to right: a man standing in profile, with naked chest and a cloak that surrounds his body, touching his forehead with his right hand. He is Diomedes. Over the naked torso he wears the pallium. Iphigenia moves forward towards the altar with a sad expression. Ulysses holds her by the left hand. Iphigenia is wrapped in a big flammeum cloak that covers her from head to toe. Under the flammeum she wears a peplos. Ulysses is recognizable through his pileus. He has abundant hair and beard. A hairband surrounds his hairy head. The beard is thick. He is wrapped in a cloak. The left hand comes out of the cloak. Agamemnon is at the right, in a three-quarters perspective, with abundant hair and beard and naked torso. The face magnificently expresses the suffering. He wears a pallium that covers his left shoulder and the lower body half. Apollo with a lyre crowns a column. Artemis with the doe in a three-quarters perspective is at the right. She wears a peplos. A big oval shield leans on the column. Right of the column is a bearded young man who wears a pallium. In front of the tent, four pensive maids with bent faces await Iphigenia's fate.



A big canvas at the back gives the impression of a closed space. A tree grows at the right. A soldier with a helmet and a big oval shield looks at the central scene (Blázquez 1993: 388-389; Lancha 1997: 146-151, pl. LXXVI, C; Dunbabin 1999: 145-146, fig. 150). M.A. Elvira, who has exhaustively studied the myth, believes the scene to be a copy with some additions, like that of Artemis, of a Greek painting dating from the years 366-330 B.C. Many paintings during the 4th century B.C. deal with the subject of the Trojan War.

Figure 12 Iphigenia in Aulis. Emprion

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