

A Discriminating Market: The Creation of a Euxine *emporion* in *Acharnians*

In Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, Dikaiopolis has grown weary of life in a *polis*. The apathetic citizens (17-22), ineffectual policies (59-124), and the sycophantic reliance on a cash economy (29-36) have compelled him to seek out, Amphytheus, a new god to broker peace with Sparta and establish a novel community away from Athens. Once he enters into this separate peace, settling into his rural home, Dikaiopolis' life is good and ultimately triumphant. His departure away from the *polis* to some other location, his general tolerance to all foreigners, and his decision to operate a barter-only *emporion* are what make Dikaiopolis so successful.

This paper will argue that Dikaiopolis plays the role of an *oikistes*; but instead of creating yet another possibly corrupt "home away from home," he founds an *emporion*, similar to those established around the Black Sea by Ionian colonizers. At the time *Acharnians* was produced in 425, the Greek settlements around the Euxine littoral were known to a majority of the audience. And while many scholars have viewed the comedy as a criticism of the prolonged Peloponnesian War, I suggest that it is also a commendation of the new inclusive policies of the Black Sea communities. The *emporia* of the Black Sea in particular, were remarkable for their multiethnic populations, comprehensive laws and regulations to promote international trade, and a successful bartering system that lasted up until the Roman period.

When Dikaiopolis goes to Euripides to get a beggar's costume, he disavows the costumes of Phoenix, Philoctetes, and Bellerophon for that of Telephus, a Greek who established his own kingdom among hostiles, away from his fellow Greeks. Although the hero claims he is from the deme Cholleidai (406), the new location of his *emporion* is not clear, only that it is away from Athens and rural (202-40). After he performs the appropriate foundation rites with his household (247-79), Dikaiopolis ensures that the *emporion* is also outfitted with the proper paraphernalia:

boundary stones (719), market-place laws (723), an inscribed treaty (727-8), and even taxation (896).

In the later bartering scenes, Aristophanes is keen to show how Dikaiopolis' rejection of coinage, the transportable symbol of a *polis*, and his acceptance of foreigners is an ideal concept in a time of war, poverty, and destructive imperialism. The Boeotian trader makes the winning principles of the *emporion* explicit: he brings all the goods found only in Boeotia in hopes of exchanging them for goods only in Athens (873). Such an exchange ensures cooperation and lasting peace. And when Dikaiopolis feasts it is on exotic foods. It clearly was not just poverty that prevented him from eating well, but also the embargoes against Athens enemies. He rejects the soldier Lamachus' business in spite of (or because of) being offered three drachma (966-8). This rejection of a *polis* mentality, frees Dikaiopolis from dealing with the typical by-products of the *polis*: litigious informers, greedy cheats, and political rivals (842-59).

By 425, most of Attica was held up in the city walls. The plague of 430 had not yet tapered off. Pericles was dead and the city's financial reserves were depleted. And yet Panticapaeum on the Kerch Strait was effortlessly supplying grain to Athens. The citizens of Panticapaeum were decorating their homes with fine ware pottery and gold jewelry. Istros in modern Romania had successfully repelled the Persians with the help of their Getic neighbors and Borysthenes-Olbia enlarged their city and enriched their community with great temples to Apollo. In the Black Sea there were exemplars everywhere for Athens to emulate. Aristophanes with his Dikaiopolis was showing the way.