

Various dates have been proposed for the dating ranging from 444 BC (Wilamowitz 1893), 442 BC (Schmid 1959), 442 or 441 BC (Jebb, *Antigone* 1900) and most recently 438 BC (Lewis 1988). Since a number of scholars recently have followed the 438 BC date (Tyrrell 1998), it is timely to reconsider the date and the evidence.

The dating depends on an anecdote attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium (Hyp *Ant* 1). He states that Sophocles was elected general in the Samian War (441/440 BC) because of his success with *Antigone*. War with Samos began in summer 441/440 BC. The elections for that year's generalship would have taken place in the month of Boedromion (around September of 442 BC). Wilamowitz argues that if Sophocles won with *Antigone* in spring 441 BC, that victory could not result in his election of general in the war. In spring 442 BC Euripides won first prize. So, that leaves spring 443 BC as the earliest production date before the war. The problem with 443 BC is that Sophocles was hellenotamias of the Delian League, and his official duties would not permit him to write and produce plays that year. Wilamowitz concludes that the *Antigone* was produced in spring 444 BC. Lewis argues that Sophocles was serving as general with Pericles in the Samian war, probably until the end of the war in 439 BC; Sophocles would not have had the leisure to write and produce until 438 BC. This date supposes that Aristophanes was mistaken in assuming Sophocles was awarded a generalship as a result of *Antigone*.

There are some serious logically and interpretative flaws with both the old date of 444 BC and the new date of 438 BC. Aristophanes of Byzantium was writing almost 250 years after the event. He believed that *Antigone* was written at the time of the Samian War. There are several logical possibilities about his account. 1. The story is completely fictitious. 2. The story is completely true. 3. The story is true in part. If the latter is correct, we have to guess which part is false. There are several possibilities. Often, in ancient as well as modern sources, the argument *post hoc propter hoc* is employed. Aristophanes may have known from such sources as Androtion (*FGr Hist* 324F38) that Sophocles was general in the Samian War, and that *Antigone* was produced around the time of the Samian War. Thus Aristophanes or his source might have created a causal connection between the two events.

The date of 444 BC is weak because it would mean that there would be a three year wait between the play and election. Does the date 438 BC hold up? To believe the 438 BC, one has to posit (1) that Aristophanes was wrong that Sophocles won the generalship as a result of the *Antigone*. (2) that Aristophanes, who assumes that the *Antigone* was produced BEFORE the Samian War, was wrong in this too. Thus, to believe the 438 BC date one has to assume that the only thing right about the anecdote is that the *Antigone* belongs to the general time of the Samian War.

Is there another date that can make better sense out of the anecdote than either 444BC or 438 BC? That is the traditional date 441 BC. If we assume that Sophocles was elected general in fall 442 BC, and that he then won first prize in 441 BC, he would be general in summer of 441 BC, when the war began, with no causal connection between the play and the election. The next election of *strategos* would be in fall of 441 BC, and we can presume that since the war was in full swing, Sophocles would be re-elected general, as was a frequent practice in Athens. If this reconstruction is correct, then the success of *Antigone* could have contributed to Sophocles' popularity during the Samian War, and his second election.

If the causal connection between the play and the election of generalship is invented, but the temporal connection is true, then 441 BC still remains the best date. *Antigone* would be produced in spring 441 and in summer 441 Sophocles was serving as general, although he had been elected general in fall of 442 BC.