THE CONTEMPORARY THEME
IN THE PERSAI OF AISKYLOS

by

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ABSTRACT

The Persæ of Aischylos is one of the few Greek tragedies with contemporary historical themes, and the only such play that has survived complete. This study undertakes to determine whether one can with certainty, or even probability, explain Aischylos' choice of his unusual theme. Much information of doubtful value has been passed down as fact. Therefore, the method followed has been to accept nothing as fact until it has been substantiated by a careful examination of the evidence.

An inspection of three theories concerning Aischylos' chief purpose in writing his other extant plays fails to produce a satisfactory explanation for the Persæ. The remainder of the study is a consideration whether the reason for Aischylos' choice of subject in this play can be found to lie in his attitude toward contemporary affairs: in his relation to the great victories of the Hellenes over the Persians, to the expansion of Athenian power by land and sea, and, above all, to the struggles of political factions within Athens. This involves an inquiry into Aischylos' opinions about contemporary affairs and his inclusion of these opinions in his tragedies other than the Persæ; a consideration of the nature of, and the circumstances surrounding, two fifth-century plays by Phrynichos that also had themes from contemporary history and that might have influenced Aischylos in his writing of the Persæ; an examination of the nature
of, and circumstances surrounding, the *Persai* itself.

The conclusions reached are as follows: First, although one cannot say how much reference to contemporary events Aischyllos felt he could justifiably include in his tragedies other than the *Persai*, one can at least observe that he did include material of this nature, since in two of the other extant tragedies there is positive evidence; moreover, in both these tragedies the contemporary allusion has a prominent place. Second, evidence outside the *Persai* reveals Aischyllos only as a patriotic Athenian and not as a political partisan having special sympathy with, or antipathy towards, any of the leading political figures of his time. Third, evidence suggests the possibility that Phrynichos in writing his tragedies with contemporary themes was motivated by political partisanship or friendship with a leading political figure, Themistokles. Fourth, although Aischyllos seems to have striven to make the *Persai* as tragic and universal as possible, the nature of the theme he had selected made failure to create a really tragic drama almost certain. There are several possible motives that might have influenced the experienced dramatist in 472 to choose this subject: the urge to meet the challenge of handling a different theme in a more effective way than had a previous dramatist; the desire to convey a religious message of direct significance for the Athenians; the wish to help one who may have been a friend and who was certainly a fellow-patriot now in trouble, Themistokles. Aischyllos was a dramatist who wrote on many levels, and in the case of the *Persai* all three suggested reasons for his selection of its
subject, since they are compatible with one another, could have influenced him in varying degrees. Thus, in regard to the choice of a contemporary theme for the *Persai*, one can only identify what was possible; to go beyond this into the realm of probability or certainty would be to go beyond the evidence.
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The *Persai* of Aischylos is unique among extant Greek tragedies in having for its subject contemporary history rather than mythology or heroic legend. I was interested in why Aischylos chose such a theme, and felt that an investigation of this question would be worthwhile. As it turned out, the results were negative. There is insufficient evidence to permit an answer to the question. However, in the course of the investigation, I found that much information that is passed down as fact has no certain basis at all. Since the correction of misinformation has some value, I feel that this study is justified.

Because I believed that the reason for Aischylos' choice of subject might lie in his reaction to the political conflicts and other contemporary conditions, I viewed the *Persai* mainly in the light of contemporary history. Accordingly, the first chapter is an examination of evidence concerning Aischylos' attitude toward the events of his time and the extent to which he promulgates these views in his plays other than the *Persai*. The second chapter is an examination of two other plays of the fifth century before Christ that we know also had themes from contemporary history, Phrynnichos' *Capture of Miletos* and the *Phoinissai*. The third chapter is a consideration of the *Persai* itself.
Aischylos and His Times

For many years scholars have interpreted the tragedies of Aischylos as possessing above all else the central religious theme of man's relation to the divine government of the world;\(^1\) other subjects are only incidentally touched upon by Aischylos and nowhere attain the importance of the religious message he has to convey. To one regarding the plays in such a way, there seems to be in them a constant emphasis on the workings of destiny and fate through Zeus' will and through human passion, on the supremacy of justice and the inevitable punishment of sin, especially ὑβρις.

Because of its contemporary subject, that is, the Persian defeat at Salamis, the Persai presents difficulties to the critic wishing to stress the predominance of the religious theme over all others in Aischylos' tragedies. Certainly, overweening pride and its consequences are portrayed in this play. On the other hand, it is not immediately obvious that Aischylos' purpose was primarily to teach a serious moral lesson of universal application rather than to arouse in the Athenians a gloating scorn for their defeated enemy; in fact, it is difficult to suppose that Aischylos could have expected the Athenians only eight years after their overwhelming victory at Salamis not to relish the

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sight of the fallen nation but to perceive its tragic, universal significance.

Since the subject of the *Persai* is contemporary history, one might hope to find satisfaction in an interpretation of Aischylos' plays that lays more emphasis on history than on religion. Accordingly, let us consider the ideas of George Thomson and, more recently, John Finley, who maintain that the theme of Aischylos' works is a vision of the historical development of society, a vision strongly reflecting Aischylos' reactions to the achievements of fifth-century democratic Athens. Thomson, tracing the roots of tragedy back into primitive tribal society and asserting that the evolution of the Athenian tragic art was conditioned above all by the evolution of society from tribal organization to that of the city-state, sees as Aischylos' basic aim to explain in his tragedies how the tribe developed into the democratic city-state. He believes that, by focusing in any one play upon some particular aspect of society's upward struggle and portraying each step in its progress as a reconciliation of opposing forces to produce the mean (instead of the domination of one over the other), Aischylos arrives at his vision of the final triumph of Athenian democracy as the end of a class-struggle achieved through the merging of the old landed aristocracy and the serfs in the formation of the new middle class, whose power is based on wealth rather than on nobility of birth. That Aischylos can set forth the pinnacle of society's rise as the ascendancy of the middle

class is possible, according to Thomson, only because he is a moderate democrat who ignores the rights of the proletariat (i.e., the slaves in fifth-century Athens) to both freedom and power. Because the theme that Thomson sees running through Aischylos' tragedies is mainly dependent on his interpretation of Aischylos' political convictions, his theory looks promising for an understanding of the inspiration behind Aischylos' *Persai*, a play with a contemporary theme. However, the *Persai* is the one play that Thomson is unable to fit into the pattern he has drawn up: he can see no more in it than the old aristocratic idea that wealth breeds pride, which is punished by the gods. Thus, aside from any weaknesses that Thomson's thesis as a whole may possess, in failing to include the *Persai* it is unsatisfactory to one attempting to find an explanation for Aischylos' choice and treatment of a subject as challenging as that of the *Persai*.


5. Using incomplete analogies to demonstrate that the roots of tragedy extend back into tribal society, he maintains that there is a close connection between the development of society and the development of tragedy. He then seems to assume (unjustifiably) that Aischylos, because he is a tragedian, must be vitally and chiefly interested in the process of society's changes from its primitive beginnings to the Athenian democracy of his own day, and he proceeds to interpret Aischylos' tragedies from the point of view of this preconceived and, as I see it, unfounded notion.
Finley\textsuperscript{6} finds a unifying theme for Aischylos' works in Aischylos' "striving for ultimate harmony," for "a final order beyond change," and in his rising "to this sense of order...through an historical vision of the painful ascent of society as a whole"\textsuperscript{7}; a vital aspect of this vision is the hope of indefinite progress within the disciplined freedom of democracy, a hope inspired by the innovating and rational atmosphere of fifth-century democratic Athens. Finley notes a reflection of this preoccupation with society's advance, a process involving the resolution of the struggle between different claims through "time, conflict, and the discovery of some higher ground of agreement,"\textsuperscript{8} in Aischylos' "characteristic use of the sequence of three plays, the trilogy, by which he expresses time and development."\textsuperscript{9} Once again, the general theory, applicable to all Aischylos' other extant plays, excludes the \textit{Persai}. In the first place, the \textit{Persai} in Finley's view is self-contained within its trilogy\textsuperscript{10} and does not, as do Aischylos' other tragedies, represent one stage in an evolutionary process developed throughout the trilogy and reaching its culmination at the end.\textsuperscript{11} In the second place, its message within Finley's scheme is negative as opposed to the positive

\begin{itemize}
\item[7.] Finley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 7.
\item[8.] Finley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 180.
\item[9.] Finley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 6.
\item[10.] Finley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 209.
\item[11.] Finley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 6.
\end{itemize}
ideas of the other plays. Instead of revealing a condition in which progress is achieved, it displays a situation in which progress is necessarily short-lived; Xerxes and, more generally, the Persians, lack the prerequisite for achievement, the recognition of the limits within which achievement is possible. Even if, as Finley believes, this negative idea contains an implied comparison with Athens, who presumably owes her victory to a possession of this knowledge of the proper bounds, the *Persai* nevertheless remains essentially different in nature from the other plays of Aischylos and, therefore, outside the scope of Finley's concept.

An inspection of these three theories concerning Aischylos' main purpose in writing tragedy thus suggests that the *Persai* cannot be fitted obviously and easily into any pattern that includes the remainder of Aischylos' extant plays. Accordingly, why Aischylos chose for the *Persai* his unconventional subject is puzzling: if he intended to mould the theme of the *Persai* to his usual aims, whatever one may consider them to be, his reason for choosing a theme that in this respect presented obstacles is not immediately evident; if he had in mind another purpose, existing either alone or in addition to his customary ones, the nature of this purpose is not clear. However, since the story of the *Persai* is drawn from contemporary history, the answer may lie directly in an understanding of Aischylos' attitude toward contemporary affairs: of his relation to the great victories of the Hellenes over the Persians, to the expansion of Athenian power by land and sea, and, above all, to the struggles of political factions
within Athens; 12 of his conception of the extent to which his attitude toward contemporary events should be allowed to intrude in his tragedies. An investigation of these two proposals will occupy the rest of this chapter.

Unfortunately, none of our existing sources for Aischylos' life 13 gives us the necessary insight into Aischylos' attitude toward contemporary events. They tell us that he distinguished himself at the battle of Marathon in 490, 14 and that he fought also in the later struggles at Artemision, 15 Salamis, 16 and Plataia, 17 but this shows only that, along with many other patriotic Hellenes, he took an active part in defending his country against the Persians. 18

12. I use the word "directly" here to indicate that the Persai may have arisen from Aischylos' desire to comment upon a particular contemporary situation.

13. Our main sources are the Aeschyli Vita found in the Codex Mediceus of his plays and an article on Aischylos in Suidas. In addition, small pieces of information are scattered here and there elsewhere.

14. Suidas, s.v. Αἰσχύλος, and Aeschyli Vita; Marmor Parium, 48, merely mentions that Aischylos fought at Marathon.

15. Pausanias, I. 14. 5.

16. Pausanias, I. 14. 5; Aeschyli Vita.

17. Aeschyli Vita.

18. To be sure, if Aischylos composed his own epitaph, as Pausanias (I. 14. 4) and Athenaios (XIV. 627c) assert, his failure to mention in it any other achievement besides his display of valour at
There is reason to believe that Aischylos made at least three visits to Sicily: one about 476/5, to produce the Aitnaiai in honour of Hieron's newly founded city of Aitna; one between 471 and 469, to give, upon Hieron's request, a performance in Syracuse of his Persai, which had won the prize in Athens in 472; a final one some time after the Oresteia, which was presented in 458 (for he died in Gela in 456/5). Commentators, both ancient and modern, seeking motives for these visits to Sicily, have seen in them a reaction by Aischylos to certain events in Athens. All such theories, however,

Marathon is an indication that he placed his participation there above his dramatic triumphs. However, while there is no evidence to refute Pausanias and Athenaios (the Vita says that the Sicilians inscribed it, and does not mention who composed it), there is also no certain evidence to prove that they were correct in assigning the authorship of the epitaph to Aischylos himself. The epitaph:

'Δισχύλον Ευφορίανος Ἀθηναίον τόδε κεύσθει μνήμα καταφήμενον πυροφόροις Γέλας. Ἀλκήν δ' ἐυδόκιμον μαραθώνιον ἀλῶς ἐν εἰποῖ, καὶ βαθυχαῖτήνες Μήδος ἐπιστάμενος.

are purely speculative. For example, one suggestion is that Aischylos used Sicily primarily as a retreat from the increasingly democratic tendencies of his time; in the case of his last journey, because he felt it expedient to remove himself from the danger of reprisal after his futile attack in the *Eumenides* upon Ephialtes' measures concerning the Areiopagos.\(^{20}\) The conjecture rests upon a subjective interpretation of one tragedy.

Aristophanes may reflect Aischylos' political leanings in the *Frogs* (lines 1420-1465), where he depicts Aischylos and Euripides, under the questioning of Dionysos, having a debate on contemporary politics (*ca.* 406 B.C.). The two dramatists differ in their opinions concerning what should be done about Alkibiades. As Gilbert Murray expresses it, "Euripides is against the unprincipled politician; Aeschylus is for supporting the troublesome man of genius."\(^{21}\) While agreeing in their dislike of the radical government in Athens, they give different answers to the question how Athens can be saved. Euripides maintains that the control of the city should be taken from those now in power and entrusted to others, that is to say, that the

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extreme democratic government should be replaced by a more moderate one;\textsuperscript{22} Aischylos, on the other hand, despairing of any real possibility of improvement for the government of Athens, contends that the city's only hope of averting disaster lies in her realizing the strength of her naval power and using it to go out and fight the enemy. To be sure, the opinions expressed here by Aischylos could have found application to the events of his own times, indicating support of Themistokles, another "troublesome man of genius," and of his naval and anti-Spartan policies. But one must remember that Aristophanes makes no direct reference to Aischylos' views on the state of Athenian affairs during his lifetime and describes only what he believes would be Aischylos' reaction, if he were still alive, to events occurring about fifty years after his death. Furthermore, Aristophanes' description of what Aischylos' opinions might be at this late date is probably based only on his interpretation of Aischylos' plays and not on any certain knowledge of the dramatist's politics. Aristophanes, therefore, cannot serve as evidence for the nature of Aischylos' attitude toward events contemporary with his own time.

\textsuperscript{22} Murray, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 77.
The writer of the so-called letters of Themistokles seems to believe that Aischylos was a friend of Themistokles, for he makes Themistokles send to Aischylos a letter (Epistle One) in which Themistokles relates the circumstances leading to his arrival at Argos during his ostracism. Another letter (Epistle Eleven), addressed to Ameinias, one of Aischylos' brothers, and appealing to Ameinias not to desert him, since Themistokles earlier gave support to Ameinias' brother Kynegeiros, is also interesting in that it indicates the letter-writer's belief in some sort of connection between Themistokles and the family of Aischylos. Nevertheless, these letters, composed probably as late as the second century after Christ, at the most provide evidence of a tradition that Aischylos and Themistokles were friends, and do not prove that in fact any such relationship existed between them.

The only remaining source of knowledge concerning Aischylos' attitude toward contemporary affairs is his own extant tragedies. At the same time, they alone can indicate how much Aischylos believed

23. See R. J. Lenardon, "Charon, Thucydides, and 'Themistokles'," *Phoenix*, XV (1961), pp. 28-40, for a discussion of the nature of these letters, a discussion in which the emphasis is on the question of the historicity of the material found in them.


contemporary events should be reflected and commented upon in tragedy. The question whether and to what extent such information is to be found in Aischylos' plays other than the *Persai* (which must remain outside the present discussion) has received various answers. For example, Gilbert Murray, remarking that "the strong tradition in the higher kind of Greek poetry, as in good poetry almost everywhere, was to avoid all the disturbing irrelevances of contemporary life," can "see no evidence of any political allusion," even in the *Eumenides*.26 Others, while insisting that the main purpose of the tragedies is religious or philosophic, do not overlook scattered political references. But *quot editores, tot sententiae*; and allusions vary with the commentator. As a result, at least three opinions have found expression: one, that Aischylos was a moderate democrat, favouring the Argive alliance brought about by the progressive democrats, but "engaged with Cimon in an attempt to rescind" the progressive measures reducing the powers of the Areiopagos;27 two, that he was in full sympathy with the progressive democrats, including Xanthippos, Aristeides, Themistokles, and Perikles;28 three, that he was not directly connected with any particular faction but, as a patriotic Athenian, aimed at reconciliation of, and compromise between,

26. Murray, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
the conservatives and the progressives in the interests of his city-state. 29

Clearly, these suggestions span almost the whole gamut of possibilities, indicating the difficulty of interpreting the contemporary allusions in Aischylos’ tragedies. Nevertheless, in attempting to understand why Aischylos chose a contemporary theme for a play, one must endeavour to settle this question. By accepting as evidence only the obvious and avoiding all the ramifications of possibility and probability that can arise one may hope to arrive at true and useful answers, although, indeed, they may be partial answers. To this end, I shall regard each tragedy as a play that was meant to unfold line by line and not as something to be read and re-read by those primarily interested in finding contemporary allusions.

The earliest extant tragedy of Aischylos after the Persai is the Seven Against Thebes, which brought Aischylos the prize at the City Dionysia in 467. For the only contemporary allusion in this tragedy one must turn to Plutarch, 30 who relates the following anecdote: when the lines (592-594)

οὐ γὰρ δοκεῖν ἄριστος, ἀλλ’ ἐξίναι θέλει,
βαθείαν ἁλονα διὰ φρενὸς καρποῦμενος,
ἐξ ἡς τὰ κεναὶ βλαστάνει βουλεύματα

were declaimed, everyone in the theatre turned around and looked

at Aristeides, obviously thinking that this description was most applicable to him. To be sure, while such words could have been used in reference to Aristeides, their aptness and complete relevance as a description of the seer Amphiaraos leave one with no proof that Aischylos intended them as implied praise of Aristeides. Moreover, Plutarch's story in no way suggests that the spectators thought Aischylos meant the lines to have a twofold significance. It does, on the other hand, show that the Athenian audience with which Aischylos had to deal in 467 B.C. was prepared to see in one of his tragedies the contemporary application of certain words. The importance of this is that it reveals a state of mind on the part of the audience that the dramatist in writing his play had to take into account; he had to realize that, whether he intended it or not, the people might interpret material suggestive of contemporary affairs as so intended and might even accept it as an expression of his opinion on such affairs. Of course, he could not foresee and take precautions against

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31. Aristeides was famed for his upright character (Aristotle, Rhetoric, II. 23. 7, uses his name as a symbol of matchless probity), especially in regard to his assessment in the winter of 478/7 of the contributions to be made by the members of the Confederacy of Delos (Plutarch, Aristeides, 24; Thucydides, V. 18. 5). This assessment was considered by the allies to be fair both at the time it was made and even later, when the Confederacy had become an Athenian Empire (see B. D. Meritt, H. T. Wade-Gery, and M. F. McGregor, The Athenian Tribute Lists, III [Princeton, N. J., 1950], pp. 242-243).
every unintentionally evoked reaction of this kind; he could not anticipate every potential allusion and, in addition, he must have felt that a chance contemporary aptness did not warrant removal of what was dramatically valuable. Obviously, therefore, one cannot assume that any passage capable of contemporary application was deliberately included in the tragedy by the dramatist as a comment on affairs of his times or even that it was in accordance with his views. At least, one cannot make such assumptions so long as the passages in question are relevant within the context of the play itself and give no indication that they are meant to have contemporary significance. At the same time, knowing the audience's sensitivity to contemporary allusion and taking it for granted that the dramatist was intelligent enough to be aware of this sensitivity, one might argue that passages that were likely to remind the Athenians of important controversial matters were probably deliberately inserted by the author. If, however, one finds that, in addition to having contemporary significance, a passage is irrelevant to its context, then one can be certain that Aischylos is intentionally taking advantage of his audience's readiness to hear in a tragedy a remark or comment by him on something or someone quite outside the tragedy and of great interest to them at that moment.

There are no such passages in the Seven Against Thebes. The most one can find is a number of passages completely relevant within the tragedy but strongly suggesting events that had taken place
shortly before 467 B.C.\(^{32}\) The first (547-549) is a reference to one man's repaying the nurture he had received as a stranger in Argos by uttering threats against the battlements of Thebes, threats which the speaker prays may not be fulfilled. This mention of threats evokes from Eteokles (550-562) a complaint about the loud boastings of the Argives, a criticism also implied by contrast in the description of one of his own men as being no braggart (554). Next comes the mention of Polyneikes as, among other things, τὸν πόλεως ταρακτορὰ μέγιστον Αργεὶ τῶν κακῶν διδάσκαλον (572-573). Not long after this, the messenger (631-652), reporting that Polyneikes is at the seventh gate, discusses Polyneikes' resentment towards Eteokles as the ἀτιμαστὴρ άνθρηλατὴν the one who dishonoured him by driving him away from home,

32. I do not include among these passages two in which others have seen possible contemporary allusions. First, in regard to lines 69-75, Thomson (op. cit., p. 313) remarks that "the allusion to the people of Thebes as Greek in speech (in fact, of course, the enemy was the same) means that we are to regard the expedition against Thebes in the light of the Persian invasion." Admittedly, Aischylos' designation of the Theban people as Greek in speech is strange. But that Aischylos should use a city that had openly medized during the Persian Wars as a symbol for Hellas seeking the help of the gods against a Persian attack is even stranger. Secondly, line 1044 (τραχύς γε μέντοι δῆμος ἐκφυγὼν κακὰ) was used by Müller in a dissertation (cited by Haigh, op. cit., p. 55) as proof of anti-democratic sentiments on Aischylos' part. However, one line considered by the critic in
his threat to repay Eteokles in the same way with exile if he should first fail to kill Eteokles in battle, and Polyneikes' shield containing the picture of a woman, Justice, leading along a warrior, and the words, κατάξω δ' ἀνδρα τόνδε καὶ πόλιν ἔξει πατρόφων ὄμι-τῶν τ' ἐπιστροφάς. Eteokles' response to this (653–676) is mainly a condemnation of Polyneikes as someone who has never in his whole life acted or thought in accordance with justice and who certainly cannot now, when ill-treating his fatherland, claim the support of Justice.

Not long before these passages were delivered to the Athenian audience, events of which they are reminiscent had taken place. These included the ostracism of Themistokles and his later condemnation as a medizer and his consequent flight from Hellas. Several factors had combined to produce the final downfall of the formerly powerful Athenian leader: The ascendancy of Themistokles' chief political opponent, the pro-Spartan Kimon, had rendered effective against him the already existing hostility of the Lakedaimonians

isolation from the rest of the tragedy, within which it is completely relevant, is unsatisfactory as evidence for the poet's views on contemporary politics. Besides, the last scene of the play, in which this line is contained, is generally considered to be spurious (see H. J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Literature [London, 1934], p. 151). At any rate, aside from Aischylos' intent, there is no reason even to believe that either of these passages would have struck the audience as having a significant contemporary meaning.

33. Plutarch, Kimon, 16. 2.
(provoked originally by Themistokles' insistence on the rebuilding of the walls of Athens). Also, Themistokles' own obnoxious vanity, self-praise, and notoriously unscrupulous dealings had, by arousing general dislike against him and lending plausibility to the suggestion that he took bribes from the Persians, made him a ready candidate for the suspicions of the Athenians. Finally, the under-cover activities which the ostracized Themistokles had engaged in throughout the Peloponnese (after he had found refuge at Argos) had given the Spartans something that, because of the present Athenian hostility toward Themistokles and the Spartans' own influence in Athens, they were able to use as evidence of his complicity in the medism of Pausanias.

34. Plutarch, Themistokles, 21-22.

35. Thucydides, I. 135. Despite the alleged documentary proof offered by the Lakedaimonians in support of this charge of medism and although Themistokles may have communicated during his ostracism with Pausanias (Plutarch, Themistokles, 23), it is probable that Themistokles was working solely for the formation of an anti-Lakonian league (see Forrest, op. cit., pp. 229 and 232). This, of course, would have strengthened the Spartans' fear of him, and their determination to be rid of him could have led them to forge documents (Forrest, op. cit., p. 238) falsely implicating Themistokles in a crime that would concern the Athenians as much as themselves and thus ensure their support in his arrest and conviction. Aside from their "proof" of his guilt and the abundance of ill-will toward him in Athens, the fact that the centre from which Themistokles had
It is difficult to believe that Aischylos did not see the resemblance between these events (that is, the rivalry between Themistokles and Kimon, Themistokles' unscrupulousness, his ostracism, his negotiations while sojourning in Argos, his conviction upon the charge of medism, and his exile) and certain elements in his tragedy, namely, the struggle for power between Eteokles and Polyneikes, the loud boasting of one man who, as a stranger, had been well treated at Argos, and Eteokles' condemnation of Polyneikes as thoroughly unjust, Polyneikes' stirring up of the Argives against the Thebans, and the references to "exile" and harming of the fatherland. Moreover, the developments concerning Themistokles were so recent\textsuperscript{36} that Aischylos must surely have expected his audience to see reflections of them in the \textit{Seven Against Thebes}. Furthermore, the passages in which it could see these reflected are concentrated in one area of the play\textsuperscript{37} and thus reinforce one another, which suggests a deliberate operated in the Peloponnese was Argos, a city which had observed a questionable neutrality during the Persian War, must have helped the Spartans to convince the Athenians that he had been medizing.

\textsuperscript{36} Although opinions vary on the dating of the ostracism and exile of Themistokles, the exile could not have been earlier than 471 B.C. (see below, pp. 91-93 and p. 94, n. 44, for a fuller discussion of the chronology of these events); the \textit{Seven Against Thebes} was performed in 467.

\textsuperscript{37} They all fall within lines 547-675. The only large gap between such passages within these lines consists of Eteokles' speech following
intention on the part of the dramatist as far as contemporary allusions are concerned, though what his hidden message might have been, if he intended one, is unclear. At any rate, since all the passages involved are completely relevant within the drama and provide no evidence whatever of purposeful reference to current events, further speculation is fruitless.

Having examined the *Seven Against Thebes*, one can conclude no more than that Aischylos did not in this instance hesitate to leave in the tragedy material that was likely to remind the Athenians of recent and significant experiences.

Chronologically, one arrives next, according to most recent opinion, at the *Suppliants*. For many years this work was generally believed to be the earliest of Aischylos' extant tragedies. The literary arguments for an "early production" were "the very subordinate part which ἑνοικες occupies," "the spectacular nature of the piece, and the absence of action or true περίπετες," "the faintness of the character-drawing in the case of persons not members of the chorus," "the epic simplicity of the language and generally of the thought," and "the peculiar beauty and simplicity of the choral odes."38 However, since the discovery of a papyrus fragment provided upon the words that are alleged to have reminded the Athenians of Aristeides.

38. T. G. Tucker, *The 'Supplices' of Aeschylus* (London and New York, 1889), p. xxiii. Tucker (see op. cit., pp. xxi-xxiv) assigns to the play a probable date of 492-491 B.C. He is influenced not only
external evidence that this play was almost certainly produced
later than 467, perhaps 463,\(^{39}\) scholars have belatedly discovered
in the tragedy itself a quality of dramatic thought and presentation
that is incompatible with an early date for its composition and,

by the arguments stated above but also by the allusion he sees in
the anticipated attack of the Egyptians upon the Hellenes to "that
threatened attack on Attica by the Persians which subsequently took
place at Marathon" (op. cit., p. xxi). A few scholars (e.g., Donaldson,
Müller, and Cavaignac) attempted to assign a late date to the
Suppliants on the basis of contemporary allusions alone (their
suggestions are cited elsewhere in this chapter), but without the
support of other "more certain" evidence their arguments carried
little weight.

39. From P. Oxy. XX (1953), no. 2256, frag. 8 (Lucas) we know
that Aischylos won the prize at the Dionysia with the trilogy con-
taining the Danaides and accompanied by the satyr-play, the Amymone.
This is almost certainly the group that included the Suppliants.
And since the same fragment records that Sophokles, who first
competed (probably) in 468 and on that occasion gained the victory
over Aischylos (Plutarch, Kimon, 8. 7-8), in this instance won the
second prize, the Suppliants was performed after 468. In fact, since
Aischylos' Seven Against Thebes was produced in 467, the Suppliants
must have been after 467. Moreover, although the letters AP on the
fragment may simply be the first two letters of ἄρχων, thus leaving
us in chronological suspense, it is possible that they are the
in fact, argues for a late date; in addition, they have found it possible to explain away the alleged primitive features other than the quality of thought as being demanded by the myth. However, although it now seems possible, and even probable, that the Suppliants was a late play, some uncertainty still remains. This is unfortunate,


40. For example, the scene in which the King of Argos arrives and the leader of the chorus (reinforced by the chorus as a whole) appeals for sanctuary is (Lucas, op. cit., p. 83) "as a whole...extremely dramatic. The Argive King finds himself in a quandary; if he refuses the suppliants he incurs divine anger, and if he protects them he will have a war with the Egyptians on his hands. Like Agamemnon at Aulis, like Orestes on his return, like Antigone, whatever he does he cannot avoid offence. And the agony of his indecision is rendered with a clarity which is unique before the plays of Euripides."

Finley (op. cit., p. 196) makes the following comment: "If the Suppliants is part of an early trilogy, one could only conclude that Aeschylus' thought emerged nearly full-grown."

41. As Lucas (op. cit., p. 84) says, "What was rarely remembered was that the Supplices could not be typical of early drama, because few myths are such that the hero can be represented collectively by a chorus. Accordingly features of the play which could plausibly be interpreted as primitive might, in fact, be due to the use of one of
since for the purpose of an inquiry into the nature of contemporary allusions in Aischylos' *Suppliants*, as in any other play for that matter, a knowledge of the date of the writing and production of the play is necessary. On the other hand, one can, without such knowledge, reach some conclusions about contemporary references in the *Suppliants*.

Searching for passages in the *Suppliants* that are in some way irrelevant within their context, one comes upon those that emphasize the voice of the people as highest authority in the state. These passages, briefly, are as follows: in lines 365-369 and 397-401, the King of the Argives insists upon consulting the people and obtaining their consent before giving the Danaids refuge from their pursuers, the sons of Aigyptos; in lines 517-518, the King tells the Danaids that he will now call together the people of the land in order to make the general public well-disposed towards them; in lines 600-624, Danaos reports to his daughters that the Argives, by unanimous vote, have passed a decree granting them asylum; in lines 698-703, the Danaids pray for the safety of the people, who control the state; in lines 739-740 and 942-944, there is reference to the vote of the people as guaranteeing the protection of the Danaids.

Clearly, the Argos of Aischylos' *Suppliants* is one in which the king's position is a nominal one only and the actual rulers are the people; in other words, its nature is that of a democracy. But surely, as both A. Diamantopoulos and W. G. Forrest note, this

the few myths in which it was possible to give the chorus this unusual predominance."
emphasis in the *Suppliants* on the supreme power of the people in the state is, to quote Forrest, "totally irrelevant in any mythological situation." At the same time, reference to a democratic Argos is certainly relevant to conditions existing in that city within the fifth century. After the destruction by Kleomenes of the Argive army at Sepeia about 494 B.C., the government of Argos had passed into the hands of the *douloi* and had become more democratic; later, at some time before their revolt from Tiryns in 467, perhaps, as Forrest conjectures, close to the date of Themistokles' flight from Argos, the *douloi* were expelled from Argos by the aristocrats, but probably, since Argos in 462/1 made a treaty with democratic Athens, either the *douloi* then regained control of Argos or the aristocratic government became more democratic in nature.

The mythologically irrelevant emphasis in the *Suppliants* upon the supreme authority of the people is so prominent an element that it must have been included for some deliberate reason. Therefore, when one finds that it is relevant if applied to the same city at a time somewhere within a thirty-year period preceding the production of the play and for these reasons would form an allusion that an audience could easily, and, in fact, would be likely to, perceive, one can


43. Thucydides, I. 102. 4.

44. See Forrest, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-232, for a fuller presentation.
hardly doubt that the dramatist intended it to have this application. To put it more strongly, Aischylos must certainly have been deliberately making a contemporary allusion here.

Another passage that must be part of the contemporary allusion in the *Suppliants* is the long prayer (lines 625-709) in which the Danaids express their gratitude to the Argive people for granting them refuge by praising, and invoking blessings upon, the Argives. This passage, as a whole, differs from those cited above in that it does not contain a direct statement either of the authority of the people or of the act through which the people have in the *Suppliants* exercised their authority. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it is expressly uttered in return for the act in question, follows immediately upon the announcement of the act, contains near its end (lines 698-703) a direct reference to the supremacy of the people in the government of the city together with praise of this government and a wish for its continuing safety, and comes only after attention has been several times drawn to the sovereignty of the Argive people, this expression of gratitude can hardly be separated from allusion to contemporary Athenian experience.

45. Aischylos might have been making an indirect allusion to popular government in Athens, but this seems unlikely, when it was possible for the Athenians to see a direct reference to the same city (Argos). In any case, the element that is irrelevant in the tragedy would still be relevant within the sphere of contemporary affairs.
As to what significance the emphasis upon a democratic government at Argos and the expression of gratitude toward the Argives could have had for an Athenian audience and, accordingly, what purpose Aischylos had in making the allusions in this play, it is impossible to ascertain. The various theories make clear the variety of possible applications. A. Diamantopoulos, who dates the *Suppliants* to 493/2, argues that Aischylos' insistence on the protection of suppliants, and on the responsibility and sovereignty of the *demos*, is understandable in 493 as a justification of the democratic policy of the non-appeasers in the face of accusations that through aid to the Ionians they had exposed Athens to Persian reprisals. Diamantopoulos also believes that this play could have been an attempt to promote an alliance with Argos in opposition to those who might have been trying to acquire Sparta as a friend. He explains the postponement of the production of the *Suppliants* by suggesting a strengthening in the power of pro-Spartan, anti-Ionian feelings among the Athenians, as evidenced, in his opinion, by the Athenians' hostile reaction to Phrynichos' *Capture of Miletos*, which he dates to the spring of 492.

E. Cavaignac dates the *Suppliants* to 470 because of the similarity he sees in the position of Themistokles at that time to that of the Danaids in the play. He suggests that Aischylos in the

47. See below, pp. 43-58, for discussion of this play.
Suppliants is either exhorting Argos not to give up Themistokles to the Spartans and Athenians or is expressing gratitude that they had not handed Themistokles over; which of the two conjectures contains possible fact depends on the chronological relation of the play to Themistokles' ostracism. 49

Müller 50 saw in the abundant praise of Argos in the Suppliants, and Donaldson 51 saw in the "distinct references in the Suppliants to amicable relations between the popular party at Argos and the Athenians," reason to place this tragedy in 461, the year when Athens and Argos were entering into an alliance with one another. 52

Forrest, 53 who accepts 463 as the year in which the Suppliants was produced and believes that the play was written late in 464 or early in 463, advances the theory that Aischylos was reminding the

49. See below, p. 91 and p. 94, n.44.
52. Donaldson was influenced by references in lines 761 and 952-953 "to the anticipated results of a conflict between Greeks and Egyptians," that is, to the outcome of the fighting in Egypt where the Athenians were helping Inaros, king of Libya, in his revolt against Persia. However, since any references to a conflict between Greeks and Egyptians are completely relevant within the play itself, one cannot justifiably interpret them as allusions to the affairs of contemporary Athens.

53. Op. cit., p. 239. To quote Forrest: "Its theme is the dilemma of Argos--should she accept a suppliant even at the risk of war? In 470
Athenians of the democratic Argives' earlier support of the anti-Spartan Themistokles in an attempt to influence the democratic Athenians to break relations with Sparta and to make a treaty with the Argives.

I do not propose here to argue the relative merits of the theories I have mentioned, for, since each one is based on mere possibilities, such an exercise would not result in a conclusion certain enough to be of use to the inquiry under progress, i.e., the reason for Aischylos' selection of a contemporary theme in the Persae.

In conclusion, therefore, an examination of the Suppliants reveals that Aischylos at some time, whether before or after producing the Persae, included in a tragedy a repeated allusion of a political nature. What significance it held for the Athenians and what political or patriotic feelings on the dramatist's part inspired it are not clear.

Passing on to the Oresteia, the only complete trilogy of Aischylos that we have, performed in 458 and awarded first prize at the City Dionysia, one can immediately say that the first two plays of the group, the Agamemnon and the Choephoroi, do not contain any obvious allusions to contemporary events.54 The third play, however, provides

_argos had been faced with just this dilemma and had answered it, as she does in the play, by accepting the suppliant and by risking war, with Sparta certainly and perhaps, as it then seemed, with Kimonian Athens as well."

54. Since an alliance between Athens and Argos had been formed only a few years before, in 462/1, it is perhaps, as J. B. Bury
material for discussion.

Murray comments as follows: "Considering that the strong tradition in the higher kind of Greek poetry, as in good poetry almost everywhere, was to avoid all the disturbing irrelevances of contemporary life, I see no evidence of any political allusion in the Eumenides. At most one may suspect that the deep longing for peace and concord expressed in the lyrics towards the end of the play and in some of Athena's speeches may be the result of emotions stirred by the conflicts of the time. That is a very different thing from political allusion." (In support of the longing for peace, he cites lines 976 ff. and 858 ff.) I think, however, that one must admit the presence of more contemporary political influence and deliberate allusion in the Eumenides than Murray has done.

To begin with, it is unreasonable to believe that in the Eumenides Aischylos wished, as Murray maintains, "to avoid all the disturbing irrelevances of contemporary life," when one considers that in this tragedy he went out of his way to create a situation in which it was possible for him to lay heavy stress on two subjects that were extremely significant in Athens. He almost certainly broke

(A History of Greece [2nd ed., London, 1916], p. 352) suggests, "a not undesigned compliment to the new ally that he makes Agamemnon lord of Argos and not of newly-destroyed Mycenae," but at any rate this innovation in the dramatic setting of the trilogy does not take on obvious significance until the third play, the Eumenides.

with tradition in making Orestes' trial the cause of the founding of the Areiopagos, and through this innovation he was able to give special prominence to a discussion of the functions and powers of the Areiopagos; this was only three or four years after Ephialtes' controversial reform of this body had robbed it of most of its powers. He also broke with tradition in laying the scene of the trilogy in Argos instead of in Mykenai, and because of this innovation the emphasized alliance in the Eumenides between Orestes' city and Athena's reflected the actual alliance between Argos and Athens that had been formed only three years before the production of the Eumenides and was still in effect.

That Aischylos did stress these subjects becomes clear when one examines the passages in which he obviously deals with them. In the order of their occurrence in the play, they are as follows: in lines 287-298, after having explained his position and the reason for his coming to Athena, Orestes invokes Athena's aid and promises her that he and his land and the Argive people will be her trusty allies for evermore; in lines 667-673, Apollo tells Athena that he has sent

56. To quote Haigh (op. cit., p. 119, n. 2): "In placing the trial of Orestes before the Areopagus Aeschylus follows the old tradition (Hellanicus, frag. 82). But he introduces a new feature by making the trial to be the cause of its first institution." That the association of Orestes' trial and the founding of the Areiopagos was an innovation on Aischylos' part may be taken, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, as almost certain.
Orestes as a suppliant to her in order that she may win him and those coming after him as new allies and that this alliance may last for ever; in lines 681-706, Athena delivers a lengthy speech explaining the venerable and eternal nature of the court of judges that she is establishing, the court of the Areiopagos; in lines 762-774, after his acquittal, Orestes pledges an oath that his people, the Argives, will maintain for ever the alliance that he has made with the Athenians.

So pointed are the allusions to contemporary events that we are justified in believing that Aischylos was in fact conveying a message to his fellow-citizens. What this message was becomes obvious upon a closer examination of the evidence.

First, the making of an Athenian alliance with Argos and the reform of the Areiopagos had arisen out of and had been the cause of political contention in Athens. Kimon and his followers were intent on maintaining a policy of friendship with Sparta, the ally of the Persian Wars. Moreover, they were not in favour of any diminishing of the power of the Areiopagos, for, although such men as Themistokles and Aristeides (past archons) had been members of this Council, it was essentially an oligarchic conservative body, and, therefore, "it served naturally as a centre of action to the oligarchical or conservative party," of which Kimon was leader. On the other hand, the radical democrats led by Ephialtes felt that oligarchic Sparta

57. Aristotle, Politics, II. 1274 a.

was now Athens' real enemy, and they were struggling to bring about an alliance between Athens and Argos, a city that had observed a suspicious neutrality during the war with Persia but which they felt would prove a staunch ally against Sparta, since she was Sparta's chief rival in the struggle for the hegemony of the Peloponnese. Of course, they were also desirous of a removal of some of the powers of the Areiopagos. In the year 462/1, this conflict of interests came to a head and affairs moved rapidly. In 462, Kimon was absent from Athens assisting Sparta in her resistance to the Helot rebels in Ithome, a circumstance that Eduard Meyer\(^59\) suggests benefited Ephialtes in that it gave him a free hand to promote his policy. Following this, in uncertain chronological order, were the insulting dismissal by the Spartans of the Athenian troops not long after they had arrived, Ephialtes' reform of the Areiopagos sometime in the archonship of Konon, 462/1,\(^60\) Athens' withdrawal from the Hellenic anti-Persian confederacy, which she had joined in 481, and her formation of an alliance with Argos,\(^61\) and the ostracism of Kimon in the spring of 461 and his consequent departure from Athens.\(^62\) Soon after, Ephialtes was murdered.\(^63\) Obviously, much civil turmoil surrounded the reform of the Areiopagos and the drawing up of a

^{60}\) Aristotle, Ath. Pol., 25. 2.  
^{61}\) Thucydides, I. 102. 1.  
^{62}\) Plutarch, Kimon, 17. 2.  
treaty with Argos, the two contemporary subjects that are given so prominent a place in Aischylos' Eumenides.

As to Athens' external affairs following the treaty with Argos, in 461/0 she captured Naupaktos from the Ozolian Lokrians and occupied Megara, which had asked for Athenian protection after deserting the Peloponnesian League because of a dispute with Corinth. In the spring of 460, Athenian troops who were engaged with their allies in a campaign against Kypros left the island and sailed to Egypt to help Inaros in his revolt against Persia. At this time, with much of her fleet so far away, Athens found herself at war with three states, Korinth, Epidauros, and Aigina, all supported by Peloponnesian troops. Despite her apparent disadvantage, she came out victorious in the several land and sea battles fought between the spring and autumn of 460. In 459/8, when a large number of Athens' troops were still in Egypt, Sparta sent an expedition to central Hellas to force the Phokians to restore to the Dorians one of their towns they had taken. After this, about the time of Aischylos' Oresteia, the Lakedaimonian troops lingered in Boiotia, plotting with men inside Athens to check the city's power. It was obvious that war with Sparta was imminent. And, indeed, in the summer of 458, not long

64. Thucydides, I. 103. 3-4.
65. Thucydides, I. 104. 2.
67. Thucydides, I. 107. 2 (he tells us that the city the Phokians took was one of three: Boion, Kytinion, or Erineon) and 107. 4.
after the Oresteia had been performed, the Peloponnesians and Athenians met in battle at Tanagra, near the Attic frontier. 68

When one keeps in mind the civil discord surrounding and following the reform of the Areiopagos and the making of the alliance with Argos and, besides, the grave danger of an attack from Sparta that now threatened Athens, certain passages in the Eumenides take on greater significance and make clear the message that Aischylos was trying to convey. Some have seen in lines 292-298, where Orestes invokes Athena, whether she is in some region of the Libyan land helping those she loves or is in the Phlegraian plain, a reference to the presence of Athenian troops in Egypt. K. J. Dover 69 is probably right in saying: "In the present state of our knowledge it would be incautious to interpret these lines as anything but an invocation of the type which names localities favoured by the god, cf. Theocr. 1. 123." However, while Aischylos may not have intended this as a contemporary allusion, the audience may have interpreted it as such, coming as it does immediately after reference to a military alliance with Argos; I note it, therefore, as a

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69. "The Political Aspect of Aeschylus's Eumenides," J. H. S., LXXVII (1957), p. 237. Not only was Athena closely associated with Lake Tritonis in Libya and with the Phlegraian plain, but also "the Athenian force in Egypt fought in the Delta, not in Libya" and "Aeschylus certainly drew a distinction between the two in Supp. 279 sqq...." But the reference may be loose, and Inaros was prince of Libya.
possible allusion. In lines 775-777, after another reference to the alliance between Athens and Argos, Orestes bids his farewell, praying for Athens' safety and victory in her struggle with her foes. This prayer, especially in this context, must have held a strong personal meaning for the Athenians. More important, in lines 853-854 and 858-866, Athena predicts greater honours for Athens in time to come, and then she requests the Furies not to implant in the Athenians the spirit of internal war but to let their fighting be against those outside. Aischylos must have intended this to have contemporary significance; not only does his Athena repeat her plea against civil strife, varying the wording, but he also ensures that it will strike the reader with extra force by making it the only admonition made by Athena to the Furies against a specific action, and, moreover, an unprovoked one in the context of the play. As to the people that the Athenians should fight against, I think that Aischylos must be referring to the Spartans. His words, θυραίος ἐστω πόλεμος, are certainly most fitting in reference to the Spartans, who are literally just outside Athens. 70 Again, in lines 976-987, the chorus, now reconciled to its fate, prays that faction and civil war may never arise within the city and that everyone in the city may unite in a spirit of common love for one another and in

70. Meyer (G. d. A., IV:1, p. 549) interprets lines 858-866 (especially 864 and 865) as meaning a resumption of the war with Persia, especially the freeing of Kypros; but there is in these lines nothing conducive to such an interpretation.
common hatred for the same enemy. And this, it seems, must have been the contemporary message that Aischylos was aiming at when he deliberately included allusions to the treaty with Argos and to the reform of the Areiopagos.

It is not enough to say that Aischylos is merely expressing his approval of the alliance by presenting it, through Orestes' words, in a favourable and promising light; for the emphasis on it obviously serves to bring to the fore the danger that threatens Athens, the impending attack from Sparta. His manner of presenting it also gives to the Athenians the encouraging idea that, while many of their own fighting men are absent carrying on wars in other places, especially Egypt, they can count on the support of a faithful ally. Furthermore, since the alliance was carried through by the radical democrats in the face of strong opposition from the conservatives, it would have served to remind the Athenians of the civil strife that Aischylos in the Eumenides prays the Athenians may be without. This interpretation is obvious. Moreover, it explains why Aischylos was expressing his approval of the alliance as long as three years after it had been made.

As for the reference in the Eumenides to the Areiopagos, it also contributes to the message advising unity in the face of common danger rather than being an end in itself. There have been many attempts to decide what opinion on the reform Aischylos was trying to express. The chief possibilities are: he could be attacking this achievement of the progressive democrats; he could be announcing his acceptance of the
reform, but with reservations; he could be announcing his unreserved approval of the reform;\(^{71}\) he could be concentrating on appeasing the non-progressives while accepting the reform himself.

The evidence for the different possibilities comes mainly from Athena's long speech in lines 681-706. Some critics see in it a heavy emphasis on the Areiopagos' time-honoured duty as moral guardian of the state, indicating that Aischylos thought it would have been better had it remained in possession of all its powers. Others believe that Aischylos, by stressing, along with the venerable quality, the eternal nature of this august body, was, while in favour of the reform himself, trying to appease those who were not by assuring them that its powers would last despite any legal changes. Lines 690-695, where Athena says that upon the hill of Ares reverence and fear will keep her citizens from doing wrong unless they themselves taint the laws with evil influences, can be interpreted either as a criticism of the changes the radical democrats have already made or as simply a recommendation that they go no further in their innovations. Still others argue that Aischylos, in having Athena found the Areiopagos for the purpose of a trial for homicide (lines 483-484), indicates his acceptance of the limitation of its powers, since Ephialtes had left to the Areiopagos, out of all its major powers, jurisdiction only in cases of homicide.\(^{72}\)

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72. Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.*, 25. 1-2 and 57. 3. Norwood (*op. cit.*, p. 115) feels that in the *Eumenides* it is implied that Athena is leaving the old duties of the Furies, the moral safeguard of men, to the
The difficulty scholars have had in attempting to decide from the Eumenides what Aischylos himself felt about the rightness or wrongness of the reform of the Areiopagos is obviously due to Aischylos' failure to present his opinion clearly. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that he was fully aware of the impression his words would create and had deliberately made them confusing. In his view, an assessment of the reform was not important. What was important was to avoid internal dissension at a time when a united effort was needed against an outside enemy. If we abandon efforts to identify Aischylos' political sympathies, if we look on the allusions to the Areiopagos and to the relationship with Argos as advice to the Athenians in their crisis, difficulties disappear and the pattern of thought emerges clearly. Let us, then, return to the passages already cited and trace this pattern of thought as it develops. Following the two references to the alliance with Argos (lines 235-292) that draw the attention of the Athenians to the contemporary political and military situation and provide them with some encouragement, comes Athena's long speech (lines 681-706) concerning the court of judges that she is founding, a speech of such a nature that it might make those who were against the recent reform of the Areiopagos feel appeased and those who were in favour of it feel Areiopagos, an implication that would reinforce the claim of the Areiopagos to its former extensive powers rather than its recently limited ones. However, the duty of the Furies, as it is clearly presented in the Eumenides, line 421, is to drive murderers out from their homes, and it is the duty of deciding what is to be done with a murderer that is handed over to the court of the Areiopagos.
satisfied. Included in this speech is the exhortation to maintain
reverence for law and order and not for anarchy or tyranny. Then there
is another reference (lines 762-777) to the strong and lasting alliance
with Argos, followed by a wish for Athens' victory in war, addressed to
an audience by now attuned to the contemporary significance of the play.
Next (lines 853-854) comes the heartening prophecy by Athena of greater
honours for Athens in the future and then (lines 858-866) her strong
plea to the Furies not to bring civil war upon the Athenians but to let
them fight with enemies just outside their door, so to speak, all of
which was useful advice for the Athenians themselves. Finally, and most
important, is the passage in which the chorus of Furies, who earlier
(lines 490-565) threatened to let death and destruction run rampant
amongst mankind if the jury of the newly founded Areiopagos acquitted
Orestes, have become reconciled to the fact that it did acquit him, have
accepted its authority in this matter, and themselves promise to bring
all manner of blessings upon Athens and pray at great length for her
future good fortune, including (lines 976-987) the especially pertinent
wish that the people may unite against their enemy. These words, coming
from beings that had themselves, in the interest of the good of the
Athenians, accepted something they were earlier against, carried special
force in 458 B.C.

Standing alone, the passages containing prayers for an absence of
internal strife and for unification against a common foreign enemy,
along with the prophecy of victory in war, might be interpreted, to
refer back to Murray's words, simply as, "the result of emotions stirred
by the conflicts of the time" in which the Eumenides was written. But
they do not stand alone. Rather, they follow, and are closely connected to, obviously deliberate references to contemporary political situations. Moreover, they make these references meaningful in a way that they would not otherwise be. Viewed in such a context, they can hardly be regarded as anything but intended contemporary allusions themselves.

In the *Eumenides*, therefore, Aischylos, by making innovations in the traditional mythological story he was dealing with, brought in contemporary political allusions that served to point out a message of significance in the grave situation in which the Athenians found themselves about the time of the production of the *Eumenides*. At the same time, although Aischylos gave this message a prominent place in his play, he did not in any way sacrifice the artistic quality of the tragedy nor did he fail to contribute any other ideas of a perhaps loftier and broader, or merely different, nature. Moreover, as to Aischylos' political feelings, one can justifiably infer from this play no more than that Aischylos was a patriot interested in the safety and welfare of his city-state; there is no evidence that he was speaking from motives of political partisanship, and the nature of his message seems incompatible with this idea.

The last of Aischylos' extant tragedies, the *Prometheus Bound*, is, like the *Suppliants*, of uncertain date. Many critics believe that it must have been written some time after 479/8, since they assume that Prometheus' description in lines 363-372 of the eruption of Aitna was based on Aischylos' knowledge of an actual eruption of Aitna that took
place in that year. G. Zuntz, however, argues that this terminus post quem cannot be set, because "Aeschylus... in referring to Mt. Aetna, ...echoes an archaic epic which coloured the ancient saga of Typho with the experiences of the first Greek settlers on the shores of Sicily." H. J. Rose believes the Prometheus Bound was written soon after 479/8, but it is generally ascribed to the late part of Aischylos' career and is placed, according to varying tastes, after the Persai or after the Seven Against Thebes or even after the Oresteia.

73. The Marmor Parium, 52, places it in this year. As for Thucydides' statement of its date in III. 116. 2, A. W. Gomme (A Historical Commentary on Thucydides, II [Oxford, 1956], p. 432) has the following to say: "πεντηκοστῶ έτει: not, I think, intended as a round number, but for the year which we call 474 B.C." He adds, "Thucydides is not vouching for the accuracy of his date."


76. E.g., Thomson, op. cit., p. 246. I should mention that, because of the seemingly un-Aischylean theology and other features uncharacteristic of Aischylos, some have even doubted the authenticity of the Prometheus Bound. I quote Lucas' statement (op. cit., p. 106) of the problem: "It need not be concealed that it has been seriously suggested that the Prometheus Bound is not the work of Aeschylus but of an unknown author who lived in the second century and probably intended the play for reading. Its peculiarities are so real that a number of scholars of repute would accept the hypothesis if the difficulties involved were not greater than those it is meant to remove."
Despite their inability to establish the date of the *Prometheus Bound*, and often in an attempt to date it, critics have seen in it contemporary political allusions. For example, Norwood, who conjecturally assigns the play to about 465 B.C., sees a reference to Themistokles in line 1068: τοὺς προδότας γὰρ μισεῖν ἔμαθον. However, since this sentence is relevant in its context, being the words of the chorus as it explains why it will not forsake Prometheus, there is no basis for viewing it as a contemporary reference. Similar suggestions have no firm foundation.

The *Prometheus Bound*, therefore, provides no evidence of Aischylos' use of contemporary allusion and, consequently, no evidence of his views on contemporary affairs.

To sum up: first, although one cannot say how much reference to contemporary events Aischylos felt he could justifiably include, one can at least observe that he did include material of this nature, since in two of the extant tragedies (excluding the *Persai*) there is positive evidence; second, in both these tragedies the contemporary allusion has a prominent place; third, the one tragedy in which Aischylos' meaning is clear within the contemporary allusion reveals Aischylos as a patriotic Athenian, putting the welfare of his country above all else; fourth, nowhere does Aischylos reveal any feelings of political partisanship or special sympathy with, or antipathy towards, any of the leading political figures of his time.

CHAPTER TWO

Phrynichos and Contemporary Themes

Now that we have inquired into Aischylos' opinions about contemporary affairs and his inclusion of these opinions in his tragedies other than the Persai, it is necessary, before approaching the Persai itself, to consider the two other fifth-century tragedies that we know resembled the Persai in having contemporary themes, that is, Phrynichos' Capture of Miletos and his Phoinissai. Since these two plays preceded the Persai, they might have influenced Aischylos in his choice or treatment of the subject of the Persai.

Our knowledge of the dramatist Phrynichos himself is very limited. He won his first tragic victory in 511, and gained at least one other, in 476. It seems that he was famed for his writing of beautiful lyric poetry. We have the names of ten of his plays, and to judge from these titles, he appears to have employed contemporary history as a subject only in the two plays already mentioned, and possibly in a third, designated by the words Δίκαιοι ἡ Πέρσαι ἡ Σύνθεσις. Nothing is known

1. Suidas, s.v. Φρύνιχος.
2. Plutarch, Themistokles, 5. 4.
3. Aristophanes, Birds, 748-751; Thesmophoriazousai, 164-6; Wasps, 220 and 269.
about this beyond the triple title, which, incidentally, is found only in Suidas. Hence it is conjectured that these names may originally have been applied, not to a separate play, but to either the Capture of Miletos or the Phoinissai or both in part. There is no certain evidence concerning his activities outside the field of tragedy. There is one reference in Aelian to Phrynichos being chosen as strategos by the Athenians, not because of party spirit (σπουδᾶς) or noble birth or wealth, but ἐπεὶ τοῖς πυρριχισταῖς ἐν τινι τραγῳδίᾳ ἐπιτήδεια μέλη καὶ πολεμικὰ ἐξεπόνησεν, ὅτι ἡ κατακτήσατο τὸ θέατρον καὶ ἐκράτησε τῶν παρόντων, ὅτε παραχρῆμα αὐτὸν εἴλοντο στρατηγεῖν.... Unfortunately, there is no way of testing the historicity of his story. Clearly, there is little in our knowledge of Phrynichos himself to help us in our study of his plays.

Phrynichos' Capture of Miletos was the earliest play that we know was written with contemporary history as its theme; it portrayed an event that took place in 494 B.C., the capture and destruction of the Ionian city of Miletos by the Persians, and must, to judge from the strong reaction it evoked, have been produced soon after that, perhaps in 493 B.C. One must not forget, however, that any statement of the date of this tragedy is based only on conjecture. We are not sure that the name of the play was actually Μιλῆτου ἁλωσίς. In fact, such a title is unusual for a Greek tragedy, which was commonly designated by

5. See below,
the name of one of the characters or of the chorus, and the references we have to this drama do not make it clear whether Μιλήτου Ἀλωσις was the title or merely the subject. 7 Nauck 8 mentions the possibility that the capture of Miletos formed the subject of the Persai, one of the seven plays of Phrynichos listed in Suidas. This seems unlikely. The seven dramas listed probably formed a selection of plays in a special edition in ancient times (or were at least found among the best circulated plays), and it is doubtful whether a tragedy that had been banned and possibly destroyed (as had the play whose subject was the capture of Miletos) 9 would have been included in such a selection. Therefore, the tragedy of Phrynichos with which I am concerned at the moment was probably one quite separate from his Persai. 10 At any rate, since the subject (of prime interest in this case), if not the title, of the play performed soon after 494 was certainly the taking of Miletos and since there is no evidence that any other name should be applied to it, I shall refer to it as the Capture of Miletos.

7. See Strabo, XIV. 635; Plutarch, Moralia, 814 B; Herodotos, VI. 21. 2.
9. See below, p. 45.
10. The name Πέρσαι, along with the two other names Suidas groups with it, Δίκαιοι... ν Ἔνθηκοι, may be an alternative title for the Phoinissai, a play whose subject we believe was the defeat of the Persians at Salamis and among whose characters was a council of elders, advisers to the king, men who could have been described by the adjectives
Unfortunately, although there are several references to the play in ancient literature,\textsuperscript{11} not a fragment remains. Indeed, this is not surprising, for we learn from Herodotos, our main source, that its author was fined for representing such a scene on the stage and a ban was imposed forbidding μηκέτι μηδένα χρασθαι τούτῳ τφ δραματι.\textsuperscript{12} Whether or not Phrynichos was forced to destroy the play, which is attested to only by Aelian\textsuperscript{13} in a collection of anecdotes, matters little, for the prohibiting of any more performances of the Capture of Miletos in itself amounted to virtual destruction of the play.

One wonders what was contained in the play to cause such a disturbance. We are aware that it dealt with the capture of Miletos by the Persians, but, as to Phrynichos' treatment of this theme, we have little information. What specifically did he portray? Herodotos relates what took place at the destruction of Miletos, and goes on to mention the play by Phrynichos that treated this theme:

\textit{Δίκασιοι or Σύνθωμοι}. (A. E. Haigh, \textit{The Tragic Drama of the Greeks} [Oxford, 1896], p. 43, n. 5, mentions the possibility that Δίκασιοι and Σύνθωμοι were alternative names for the Phoinissai, denoting the Persian elders; he does not suggest that the Πέρσαι may also have been another name for the Phoinissai but only that it may have been the same as the Μιλήτου ἄλωσις.)

\textsuperscript{11} Listed by Nauck, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 558.

\textsuperscript{12} Herodotos, VI. 21. 2.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Varia Historia}, XIII. 17, as cited by Friedrich Marx, \textit{Rhein. Mus.}, LXXVII (1928), p. 342.
As far as the details of the capture are concerned, we may accept Herodotos' account; he could have spoken to eyewitnesses or heard confirmed reports of the event. Indeed, he prefaces his story with the statement, "This is what happened to the Milesians." On the other hand, as far as the contents of Phrynichos' tragedy are concerned, Herodotos

reveals no more than that the subject was the historical event that he has just described and that it was depicted in such a way as to bring the audience to tears; he does not state, or even imply, that Phrynichos' drama portrayed the conquest exactly as it had taken place and as he (Herodotos) has just described it. It is possible, in fact, considering that the play had immediately upon performance been removed from circulation, that Herodotos did not know precisely how Phrynichos had dealt with the subject. At any rate, his account certainly does not convey this information to us.

Ammianus Marcellinus, writing in the late fourth century after Christ, also related (though differently from Herodotos) the events of the conquest of Miletos, declaring at the end that Phrynichos had used hoc argumentum in a tragedy. 15 Since this is a technical term for an outline of the basic contents of a play, it appears that Ammianus was listing the individual events as he believed they were told in Phrynichos' tragedy. However, there is no reason to believe that Ammianus could

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15. Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVIII. 1. 3 and 4. His words are as follows: Bellow Medico primo cum diripuissent Asiam Persae, obsidentes Miletum molibus magnis, minantesque defensoribus cruciabiles neces, iniecere clausis necessitatem, ut omnes magnitudine malorum adficti, peremptis caritatibus propriis, proiectoque in ignem mobili censu, arsuros se certatim congererent in communem pereuntis patriae rogum. Hoc argumentum paullo postea digestum tumore tragico Phrynichus in theatrum induxerat Athenarum....
have acquired a copy or description of Phrynichos' actual Capture of Miletos, and he may here be elaborating on and adapting what he found in Herodotos. His account, therefore, leaves us no wiser. All one can state with certainty is that this play contained some unusually vivid scenes of the horror and suffering experienced by the people of Miletos at the hands of the Persians, scenes provocative enough to cause a violent reaction among the Athenian people.

The questions why Phrynichos' portrayal of the capture of Miletos caused the reaction it did and why Phrynichos chose this contemporary theme must next be investigated. To begin with, the charge that the Athenians brought against Phrynichos is nowhere made clear. The fine, one thousand drachmai, seems to have been a standard amount levied to prevent people from making nuisances of themselves and was substantial enough to act as a powerful deterrent, at least in the case of the...

16. Marx's suggestion (op. cit., p. 347) that we may look to Euripides' Trojan Women for the construction of Phrynichos' Capture of Miletos and that in the closing lines of Euripides' tragedy (1317-1332), with the substitution of Miletos for Troy and Persians for Achaians, we have an image of the close of the Capture of Miletos is mere conjecture with no foundation whatever.
man of ordinary means. I doubt that the charge was, as E. M. Walker suggests, a nominal one of impiety in the sense of the use of a contemporary theme instead of a conventional legendary one; certainly, we hear nowhere of any law against the use of a contemporary theme and no one seems to have objected to Phrynichos' and Aischylos' later use of a contemporary theme in the Phoinissai and Persai respectively. Rather, I think it must have been one of sacrilege based on Phrynichos' alleged deliberate upsetting of the spectators at the festival of the Great Dionysia. In Demosthenes' speech Against Meidias we learn that about the middle of the fourth century complaints could be entered

17. In the fourth century, one thousand drachmai was the fine imposed upon a prosecutor "who failed to obtain one-fifth of the votes" (R. J. Bonner and Gertrude Smith, The Administration of Justice from Homer to Aristotle, II (Chicago, 1938), p. 56); upon a witness who failed either to "testify or to take the oath in disclaimer" (Bonner and Smith, op. cit., p. 137); upon a prosecutor who dropped a suit, once proceedings had begun (Bonner and Smith, op. cit., p. 58). According to the Erechtheion accounts (I.G., I, 373-4), the wage for a skilled workman in the last decade of the fifth century was one drachma per diem. This figure reflects "the rise in the cost of living produced by the Peloponnesian War" (M. N. Tod, in The Cambridge Ancient History, V (Cambridge, 1958), p. 24), and the wage must have been lower in the early fifth century, which gives some idea of the seriousness of the fine levied on Phrynichos soon after 494.

against citizens who outraged the sanctity of the Dionysiac festivals, with the possible penalties ranging from fines of various amounts to death, according to the seriousness of the offence. The same practice may have existed in the early fifth century. In any event, it is the reason behind the prosecution rather than the charge that is important in this instance.

To clarify the reason for the people's annoyance upon viewing the Capture of Miletos, I shall briefly relate the events that preceded the production of the play. In 499/8 Aristagoras of Miletos visited Hellas to gain help for the Ionian revolt. The Athenians answered his appeal by sending to Ionia twenty warships, which were accompanied by five Eretrian vessels. After arriving in Ionia, the troops left the ships and marched upland to Sardes. Although they captured and set fire to the city without meeting any opposition, they were defeated on the return march to their ships by a pursuing force of Persians, and after this the Athenians refused to take any further part in the Ionian uprising. Following this, the revolt continued to spread, and, as M. Cary says, "at the end of 498 B.C. the rebellion had become general among the Asiatic Greeks, and its high-water mark was now attained."

20. Herodotos, V. 97. 3; 99.
21. Herodotos, V. 100 - 103.
22. C. A. H., IV, p. 222.
But, from here on, Greek disunity began to take its toll, and by degrees, with the exception of one crippling defeat, the Persians gained the upper hand. The two disasters that finally brought the Ionian rebellion to an end were the crushing defeat of the Greek navy in a battle near Lade and the capture and destruction by the Persians of Miletos, the centre from which the revolt had spread. Soon afterwards, Phrynichos' portrayal of the latter event led to his condemnation. Other events that took place soon after the capture of Miletos were the first trial and the acquittal, in 493 B.C., of Miltiades, the Philaid tyrant of the Chersonese and a fugitive from Persian power, and the election of Themistokles to the office of archon for 493/2.

Herodotos gives us a clue to the reason behind the prosecution of Phrynichos by stating that the Athenians, after being reduced to tears by the spectacle of Miletos' destruction, fined the dramatist. That the Athenians took this action against

23. I refer here to the defeat of the Persian land-force in the Karian campaign of 497 (Herodotos, V. 121). This event so paralysed the Persian offensive that the Greeks gained a respite of a couple of years (see Cary, C. A. H., IV, p. 224).

24. Herodotos, VI. 14 - 16.


Phrynichos "because he had reminded them of misfortunes concerning themselves" might mean no more than that, feeling partly responsible for Miletos' fate, they were angry and ashamed at being reminded of their treachery in forsaking their own colony along with the rest of the Ionians. To be sure, Ammianus stresses only the guilty feeling of the Athenians that they were being admonished by Phrynichos for having failed to aid their own colony; this was perhaps his interpretation of Herodotos' οἰκήα, χαρά, if, indeed, he derived his account from Herodotos.

However, while the Athenians' feelings may have been as simple and unselfish as this, it is probable that another thought was involved in their assertion that they had been reminded of οἰκήα, χαρά: Phrynichos by his scenes of horror had vividly forced upon the Athenians the realization of the meaning of Persian control and of what their desertion of the Ionian cause might perhaps cost them themselves. In withdrawing their support from the Ionians, the Athenians had made it easier for the Persians to crush the revolt and thereby to gain a strengthened hold over Ionia; the virtually increased proximity of the Persians to Hellas as a result of this victory meant that the end Miletos had met hung more imminently over Athens, who had already had evidence of the Persians' desire to dominate her in the demand made in 508/7 by Artaphernes, the Persian satrap at Sardis, that an Athenian embassy should present the Persians with earth and water, the customary tokens of submission, and his demand in 504 that the Athenians should take

28. Herodotos, V. 73.
the tyrant Hippias back, and who, through her support (even if only for a short time) of the Ionian uprising, merited Persian revenge.

The desertion of the Ionians was really just one more phase in the vacillating attitude that the Athenians had been displaying toward the Persians and that arose from the combination of their desires to appease Persia and at the same time not to become subject to her. For example, Artaphernes' demands were made to embassies that the Athenians had sent to him in order, in the first instance, to conclude an alliance with Persia and, in the second instance, to dissuade Artaphernes from listening to Hippias and his supporters as they tried to turn him against the Athenians. However, when the Athenian embassy in 508/7 acceded to the demand that it present Artaphernes with earth and water the Athenians made clear their refusal to submit to Persian domination by harshly censuring the embassy on its return to Athens; and when Artaphernes demanded that the second embassy take Hippias back, it refused. In 498, deciding to accept the consequences of open hostility toward Persia, the Athenians sent twenty ships to Ionia in support of the revolt against Persian rule. And yet, apparently changing their attitude again, they soon after recalled the ships. This action, as M. F. McGregor notes, was probably due as much to a conviction of the "utter hopelessness of eventual victory" as to the particular defeat they suffered just before

29. Herodotos, V. 96.

the recall of the ships; the Athenians probably felt that further fighting against the Persians now would be to no avail whereas withdrawal at this point would appease them somewhat and allow the Athenians to fight them later at a more opportune time. The Athenians' election of Hipparchos, son of Charmos and a Peisistratid, to the office of eponymous archon in 496/5 was perhaps an attempt to conciliate the Persians.

The capture of Miletos in the autumn of 494 and the evidence of Persian cruelty and power that it afforded them must have made the Athenians feel that any hopes they had had of peacefully warding off the Persians were in vain; accordingly, it must have made many Athenians doubt the wisdom of their early decision to withdraw and to remain aloof from the Ionian revolt. It is no wonder, therefore, that Phrynichos' tragedy aroused the audience to tears and to the fining of the dramatist; the spectacle it portrayed must have evoked or reinforced in many Athenians' minds a conviction of their own lack of sound judgment and the possible disastrous consequences to themselves as well as a feeling of guilt at having neglected their colony.

It has been conjectured that, however widespread was the sorrow and guilty annoyance of the Athenians witnessing Phrynichos' Capture of Miletos, the prosecution itself was the work of a group of anti-Ionians, "those who were responsible for the withdrawal of the Athenian ships

31. Dionysios of Halikarnassos, Antiquitates Romanae, V. 77. 6; VI. 1. 1.

and the abandonment of the Ionian cause," striking back for what they felt was a direct attack upon themselves. There is no direct evidence that an anti-Ionian group was responsible for the withdrawal. In fact, the only evidence that Walker can cite in support of its existence is that the sending of only (his own addition to Herodotos' words) twenty ships in the first place showed the influence of a particular political group, which would have been even happier had it been able to persuade the Athenians not to send any aid to Ionia. McGregor points out the fallacy of this reasoning by demonstrating that twenty ships, far from representing a half-hearted contribution resulting from the opposition by a strong anti-Ionian faction to the sending of aid, was clearly a generous offering on the part of the Athenians and gives no indication of anything other than general agreement on policy. Since, therefore, there is no evidence that a strong anti-Ionian faction even existed, it is vain to speculate whether such a political faction was responsible for Phrynichos' trial.

36. There is disagreement concerning the presence and identity of a pro-Persian faction in Athens from 510, the year of the expulsion of the Peisistratid tyrants from Athens. Walker (C. A. H., IV, esp. pp. 265-267) asserts that there was a pro-Persian faction, consisting of the tyrant-followers and the Alkmaionidai. C. A. Robinson ("The Struggle for Power at Athens in the Early Fifth Century," A. J. P., LX [1939], pp. 232-237) accepts a pro-Persian group, and identifies
To return to the question, why did Phrynichos choose as his theme the capture of Miletos? One might, upon first thought, suggest that Phrynichos selected the subject simply because he was an innovator and that he unthinkingly and unluckily chose a subject that was bound unduly to upset the Athenians and call forth their annoyance against him. However, Phrynichos probably had the intelligence to realize the obviously unpleasant impact that the subject would have upon the Athenian people; it is difficult, therefore, to believe that he did not deliberately produce the Capture of Miletos in order to convince the people of their folly in maintaining a policy of appeasement towards Persia (whether the blame rested mainly on the people as a whole

them with the Peisistratidai, supported, not by the Alkmaionidai, but by the aristocrats under Isagoras. McGregor (op. cit., pp. 71-95), on the other hand, argues that there was no pro-Persian faction as such in Athens after 510 B.C. W. G. Forrest ("Themistokles and Argos," Class. Quart., X [1960], pp.221-241) believes that from 499 to 490 the Alkmaionidai were friends of the Peisistratidai and thus pro-Persian, but removes Xanthippos from the ranks of the Alkmaionidai and suggests, furthermore, that neither he nor Aristeides was in sympathy with them. This is a controversial problem, depending to a great extent on one's attitude toward Herodotos' testimony regarding the Alkmaionidai.

37. In Suidas, s.v. Φρυνίκος, we are told that Phrynichos was the first to use either female masks or female characters (depending on the meaning of πρόσωπον) in tragedy.
or on a particular faction). Obviously, both suggestions are no more than mere conjecture.

One then wonders if Phrynichos on his own initiative chose this theme and thereby risked the annoyance of the people and their possible retaliation. Because Themistokles was later choregos for a play of Phrynichos produced in 476\(^3\)\(^8\) and because Themistokles held strong anti-Persian sentiments and was, moreover, at the time of the Capture of Miletos deeply and actively involved in politics, one is tempted to think that Phrynichos did not alone choose the politically significant subject and that Themistokles may have suggested it to him or may at least have encouraged him in its use. The lack of evidence for this conjecture does not argue strongly against it, for a man who was as prominent in public affairs as to be a candidate for the office of eponymous archon would have had the sense not to endanger his position by letting it be known that he was responsible for so controversial an intrigue. On the other hand, it is quite possible, if one wants to see an indication of close relationship in the connection between Themistokles and Phrynichos in 476, that the relationship came about because of Phrynichos' Capture of Miletos and the sympathy in thought between himself and Phrynichos that Themistokles found revealed in this tragedy. In other words, there is no way of ascertaining whether or not any outside influence was involved in Phrynichos' choice of the

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38. Plutarch, Themistokles, 5. 4.
contemporary theme found in the Capture of Miletos.\(^{39}\)

Our tentative conclusion must be that Phrynichos perhaps intentionally chose the subject of the destruction of Miletos and treated it in such a way as to ensure that it would have a decided impact upon the minds of the Athenians, shocking them into a full realization of the Persian danger. His fine indicates that, whether or not he intended to, he at least temporarily upset the people. Furthermore, if the acquittal of the anti-Persian Miltiades in 493 followed the production of Phrynichos' play, it may be that the dramatist actually convinced the Athenians that their policy of appeasement was mistaken. At the same time, one must note that, if Phrynichos had this purpose in mind, his intention was compatible with a regard for the welfare of Athens as a whole, and there is nothing to indicate that he was motivated by political partisanship or friendship with a leading political figure.

The second play of Phrynichos that we know was based on contemporary events was the Phoinissai. The date commonly accepted for the performance of this tragedy is 476 B.C., and its subject is generally believed to have been the same as that of Aischylos' Persai; an examination of the evidence will reveal whether or not these ideas are well founded.

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39. Since there is no evidence either that a strong anti-Ionian faction existed or that Themistokles was in any way connected with the production of the Capture of Miletos, there is obviously no basis for supposing that the trial of Phrynichos was in reality a trial of Themistokles' strength brought about by an anti-Ionian group, as Walker suggests.
The date 476 B.C. is arrived at by the following reasoning. First, the Phoinissai must have been produced somewhere between 480, the year of the battle of Salamis, and 472, the year of Aischylos' Persai, since, as Aristophanes of Byzantion testifies, the Phoinissai opens with an announcement by a eunuch of the "defeat of Xerxes," which can only mean his defeat at the battle of Salamis, and, since in addition, according to Glaukos of Rheaton as quoted by Aristophanes, Aischylos modelled his Persai on Phrynichos' Phoinissai. Second, the only reference to Phrynichos' tragedies composed between 480 and 472 is one found in Plutarch, where he tells us that Themistokles had a tablet set up in honour of a play by Phrynichos for which he was choregos and that won the prize in 476 B.C.; this play may have been the Phoinissai. Obviously, however, while the reasons for positing 480 and 472 as the termini are sound, there is no proof that the production date was 476; that the unknown tragedy for which Themistokles was choregos in 476 was the Phoinissai is an attractive idea: the hero of Salamis financed the tragedy that dealt with the battle. We cannot, however, be certain.

The assumption that the subject of the Phoinissai was the defeat of the Persians at the battle of Salamis is based partly upon Aristophanes' statement that the Phoinissai opened with a eunuch announcing the "defeat of Xerxes" and partly upon Glaukos' assertion that Aischylos' Persai was modelled upon the Phoinissai. The question now arises whether the defeat that was reported at the beginning of the play formed the

40. Argumentum ad Persas.
41. Plutarch, Themistokles, 5. 4.
main subject of the Phoinissai or not. And one can only answer this with an appeal to Glaukos' words, arguing that the most natural interpretation of them is that, among other features, the subject of Phrynichos' Phoinissai was the same as that of Aischylos' Persai.

Moreover, Aristotle's observation that tragedy usually limited itself to the events of a twenty-four hour period or close to that makes it more likely that the battle reported early in the play was the theme throughout rather than that the fight at Salamis (480 B.C.) and one of the other major encounters between Greeks and Persians (479 B.C.) were included in the same drama. To sum up, the small amount of evidence we possess points to the Persian defeat at Salamis as the theme of the Phoinissai, and there are no indications that the subject was other than this.

42. Aristotle, Poetics, 1449 b. 12-16.

43. Of course, this argument should be used warily, because there are several Greek tragedies that do not display the principle of Unity of Time: Aischylos' Eumenides and Agamemnon, Sophokles' Trachiniai, and Euripides' Suppliants (cited by S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art: with a Critical Text and Translation of "The Poetics" [4th ed., London, 1927], p. 291).

44. Marx (op. cit., pp. 337-360) contests the thesis that the Phoinissai preceded Aischylos' Persai and that the Persian defeat at Salamis was the subject of Phrynichos' tragedy. See further the Appendix at the end of this chapter.
From the testimony and fragments we possess it is possible to ascertain only a little about the *Phoinissai*, none of which is very enlightening. I have already mentioned that, according to Aristophanes of Byzantion, the play opened with a eunuch announcing the defeat of Xerxes and covering the chairs of the councillors with tapestries. Aristophanes (from Glaukos of Rhegion) also quotes the first line of the *Phoinissai*:

\[
\tau\alpha\delta'\ \epsilon\sigma\iota\ \Pi\epsilon\rho\omega\omicron\ \tau\omega\nu\ \pi\alpha\lambda\iota\iota\ beta\beta\eta\mu\omicron\omicron\omicron.\]

The title proves that there was a chorus of Phoenician women. The scholiasts to the comic dramatists Hesychios and Aristophanes have given us two fragments from the first choral ode, the opening lines:

\[
\Sigma\delta\omicron\nu\omicron\ \�\sigma\tau\omicron\ \lambdai\pi\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma
\]

\[
\kappa\alpha\iota\ \delta\rho\omicron\sigma\epsilon\rho\alpha\nu\ "\omicron\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\omicron\ 45
\]

or

\[
\Sigma\delta\omicron\nu\omicron\ \�\sigma\tau\omicron\ \lambdai\pi\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\ \nu\alpha\omicron\nu\ 46
\]

The chorus obviously began by proclaiming that they had left the temple of Sidon. Why the women had come to Sousa we have no way of knowing. There are preserved three or four other fragments from the *Phoinissai* (one is only tentatively assigned to this play), but they are of no help to us. 47


Finally, to aver that Phrynichos chose his subject merely to atone for his Capture of Miletos is pointless when one perceives the lapse of time between the two plays (about 493 B.C. to 479 B.C. or later, a long time for Phrynichos to wait before attempting to regain popularity and esteem as a dramatist); the Athenians had already won a momentous victory at Marathon, which Phrynichos could have depicted in tragedy for the purpose of soothing the Athenians and regaining their good-will. Although Phrynichos' choice of subject for the Phoinissai could be explained as simply an experiment in innovation, there is reason to believe that another motive may have dictated his selection of theme.

The hero of the battle of Salamis was Themistokles, strategos of the Athenian forces in 480; his name was so closely associated with this battle in the minds of the Athenians that any mention of Salamis could not help but remind the people of the man who had played so outstanding a part in their victory. It is significant, therefore, that about the time of the Phoinissai Themistokles acted as choregos for the author. Furthermore, the significance of this coincidence is increased, if one traces the development of Themistokles' career and notices the reversals suffered after 480 B.C.

As early as 493/2 Themistokles had held the office of eponymous archon; during this time he had persuaded the people to begin the

48. Forrest (op. cit., p. 235, n. 10) sees significance in this fact, and comments: "It seems unlikely that chance brought poet and patron together. Choregoi were appointed, not chosen by lot (Ath. Pol.,
fortifications of Peiraeus, and some time later he had convinced them that they should complete them with a view to having a safe harbour for the fleet that Athens would someday possess. Following this, he had been overshadowed politically by Miltiades, and it was only after this general, who had won phenomenal renown at the battle of Marathon in 490, had fallen into disgrace in the following year and had died soon after his trial and condemnation, that Themistokles began his rise to power. We are probably justified in seeing his influence in the replacement in 487/6 of the lot for the direct vote in the election of archons, "when," as Lenardon remarks, "we realize his struggle for power in these years and appreciate the fact of his archonship in 493/2, an office from which he was henceforth barred." Evidence of 56), and could even volunteer for service (Lysias 21. 1-5). The method of assigning them a poet is unknown, but it is possible that they chose for themselves, the order of choice being settled by lot ...."

49. Thucydides, I. 93. 3 - 94.


51. Lenardon, Historia, V (1956), p. 407. Once archons were selected by lot instead of by popular vote, they ceased to carry the greatest political influence in Athens; this left the way clear for someone like Themistokles, who had already served in the office and was thus no longer eligible, to attain the greatest influence outside of the office, without rivalry from those serving as archons. Obviously, therefore, Themistokles had a strong motive for bringing about such a change.
Themistokles' continued power throughout the eighties is best seen in the carrying of his proposal to use the silver of Laureion for the building of an Athenian fleet, instead of distributing it among the citizens.\textsuperscript{52} The culmination of his career came in 480, when, as leader of the Athenians at the battle of Salamis, he justified his naval policy and his own personal fitness to command. After this, he was still active in Athenian politics, and in 479, through his deception of Sparta (in which he was aided by Aristeides), he enabled the Athenians to fortify their city, which had been badly damaged by the Persians.\textsuperscript{53} However, in 477, Themistokles was defeated by Aristeides in his plan to burn the Hellenic fleet gathered at Pagasai,\textsuperscript{54} and I call attention to Lenardon's remark that "we may see in Themistokles' defeat a definite indication of his fall from popular favour."\textsuperscript{55} Furthermore, in this and the next few years we find Kimon, not Themistokles, continuing the war against Persia. Diodoros\textsuperscript{56} tells us that Themistokles was tried for treason, and acquitted, before his ostracism.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Herodotos, VII. 144.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Thucydides, I. 89. 3 – 93.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Plutarch, Themistokles, 20. 1-2.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Diodoros, XI. 54. Thucydides and Plutarch mention only a second accusation after the ostracism.
\end{itemize}
Lenardon⁵⁷ tentatively places the trial in 476, before or not long after March, 477/6, when Themistokles served as choregos for Phrynichos. Forrest⁵⁸ notes that the charge of medism, later preferred against Themistokles, may not have been a new one and that the Phoinissai may have been an answer to it. These are conjectures, and cannot be proved. However, whether there was a trial at this time or not, one can safely assert that Themistokles no longer enjoyed the confidence of the people.

Clearly, after 480 B.C. Themistokles stood in more and more need of support. This alone would mean little; one might well assume that Themistokles' need and Phrynichos' portrayal of a battle in which Themistokles distinguished himself above all others were mere coincidence and that Phrynichos' second venture into the field of modern drama, the Phoinissai, was prompted solely by his continued interest in experimenting with contemporary themes. As it is, however, we know that in 476 the two men were connected in the production of a tragedy and that many years before Phrynichos had produced a play, the results of which Themistokles must have applauded. It is possible, therefore, that Phrynichos in writing a tragedy that almost certainly had as its theme a battle that would have instantly called to the minds of the Athenians Themistokles' military record was motivated by a desire to glorify Themistokles in the eyes of the Athenians, whether to counteract a charge

⁵⁷. Lenardon, Historia, VIII (1959), p. 34.
of medism against Themistokles or simply to remind the citizens of his abilities and services in order to gain him something of his former influential position. If the Phoinissai was produced before 476, Themistokles' acting later as choregos for Phrynichos may well have been a gesture of thanks for the timely production of a tragedy that reminded the Athenians of the debt they owed to Themistokles. If the Phoinissai was produced in 476, then Themistokles was choregos for it; if such was the case, whether the idea of the plot was his or Phrynichos', it is possible that Themistokles' financing of the tragedy was closely connected with the fact that it dealt with a subject beneficial to him. If the Phoinissai was produced after 476, Phrynichos may have been repaying Themistokles for his past kindness in acting as choregos for him. As to whether the production of the Phoinissai helped Themistokles, we cannot be sure; we are not sure whether it came before or after his ostracism. 59

Finally, the discussion of Phrynichos' two tragedies with contemporary themes, the Capture of Miletos and the Phoinissai, suggests the following: Phrynichos possibly wrote each to convey a message related to a contemporary political situation. Whether the connection between Phrynichos and Themistokles preceded or followed one or both of the tragedies is not certain, but, since both tragedies served Themistokles' interests, it may be that there was a close relationship between the tragedies and the association of the dramatist and the statesman. Beyond this, the evidence will not take us.  

59. See below, pp. 91-93 and p. 94, n. 44.
Appendix

Marx (Rhein. Mus., LXXVII [1928], pp. 337-360) speculates that the Phoinissai was written after 472 and that it was concerned primarily with the battle of Mykale fought in 479. His methods are questionable and his arguments weak. He begins by arbitrarily rejecting documentary evidence (that is, Glaukos' statement) without having other evidence to set against it. In place of evidence, he puts forward unconvincing arguments that do not invalidate Glaukos' testimony.

To prove that the Phoinissai was later than the Persai, he says that the Phoinissai is a newer form of tragedy than the Persai, since the Phoinissai has an individual delivering a prologue at the beginning while the Persai opens with the appearance of the chorus; that Phrynichos presented in an earlier play a newer form of tragedy than did Aischylos in a later play, Marx feels, is almost unbelievable. The uncertainty of this reasoning is best demonstrated by the fact that critics now consider, because of documentary evidence regarding the date, that Aischylos' Suppliants, which also opens with the appearance of the chorus (and contains additional features that formerly persuaded most scholars to date it before Aischylos' other extant plays), almost certainly was produced, and very possibly was written, after Aischylos' own Seven Against Thebes, which opens with a prologue spoken by an individual.

Marx argues that the Phoinissai is so obviously an improvement over the Persai that it must have been written at a later date. The
improvements he cites are the more "impressive" quality of the opening of the Phoinissai, in which the audience sees the throne-room, empty except for Xerxes' "unoccupied and unadorned throne" and a eunuch and the "famous" and "costly" Persian tapestries with which he covers the seats in the room, a much more "effective" sight than the singing and dancing chorus in the Persai; the shrinking of the Imperial Council and the bringing of it on the stage as an actor, instead of having it as a chorus set off from the other characters as in the Persai; the creation of a chorus of Phoenician women, who would be able to lament much more effectively than a chorus of old men as one finds in the Persai. In answer to these arguments, one may say: first, the relative impressiveness of the two openings is simply a matter of opinion, and the opening of the Persai, where one hears described the wealth and splendour and skilled courage of the vast and formidable Persian host, would have been much more impressive than an almost empty stage, a lone figure, and some tapestry; second, it is not certain that the Council was reduced in number and given the position of an actor instead of a chorus, for some critics believe that the Phoinissai must have had two choruses, of which the Council of Elders formed one, and, besides, it is difficult to see what was undesirable in the setting off of the Elders in the Persai as a separate body apart from the actors; third, the suggestion that a chorus of women would possess a greater talent for lamentation than a chorus of aged men is invalid as support for the superiority of the Phoinissai, since there is no basis for the assumption that more effective lamentation is a criterion of better tragedy.
Following this, Marx conjectures that the subject of the play was not the defeat at Salamis as most think. Although nothing is known about the structure of Phrynichos' plays and his technique of developing a theme, Marx declares that surely Phrynichos would not have revealed the chief matter of his play so early as the prologue, for it would have left him little except to amplify an account that had already been given; perhaps, however, this is exactly what Phrynichos did. In addition, upon the basis of his unproven assumption about the date and an apparent belief that the same theme could hardly be used twice, he says it is highly improbable that Phrynichos would have employed a subject already dealt with by Aischylos. After having thus unjustifiably discarded the defeat at Salamis as a possible theme and in the same way having dismissed the battle at Plataia (possibly rightly, in this case, since it was a victory in the glory of which the Athenians took second place to the Lakedaimonians and, therefore, an unlikely subject for an Athenian tragedy; besides, there is no indication that this was the subject), he strives to demonstrate that the battle at Mykale was the subject of the Phoinissai. Again, he has no positive evidence to support his supposition, and can only produce such weak arguments as, for example, Aischylos' failure to mention the battle of Mykale in the Persai, which makes it more likely that the Phoinissai dealt with the subject, and his own doubtful restoration of a gap-filled citation of two lines of Phrynichos' Phoinissai, pointing to a battle that could only have been Mykale.
CHAPTER THREE

The Persai of Aischylos

The Persai, which was performed at the City Dionysia in the archonship of Menon, March, 472 B.C., is probably the earliest extant play of Aischylos. With it and two other tragedies, the Phineus and the Glaukos Potnieceios, and a satyr play, the Prometheus, Aischylos won the dramatic prize.

At some time after 472, Aischylos gave a second presentation of the Persai, in Sicily at the request of Hieron of Syracuse.

The main interest of the Persai for us is that it is one of the few Greek tragedies with contemporary historical themes, and the only one that has survived complete. Its subject was an event that had happened only eight years earlier, the defeat suffered by the Persians at Salamis in 480. The aim of the present investigation is to determine whether or not one can with certainty, or even with probability, explain Aischylos' choice of this unusual theme. For this purpose,

1. See above, pp. 19-21, for a discussion of the dating of the Suppliants.

2. Argumentum ad Persas. This was not his first victory, which he won in 484 (Marmor Parium, 50).

since the Persai is the only one of the tetralogy that has been preserved, it is fortunate that there is no apparent connection of subject between the Persai and the three other plays performed at the same time (and conventionally based on mythical themes); in other words, the Persai is complete in itself and one can understand it without reference to the other members of the tetralogy.

4. Since Suidas, s.v. Φρύνιχος, tells us that Sophokles was the first to write unconnected trilogies and tetralogies, many critics have been troubled by the apparent lack of any connection in plot running through the group of Aischylos' plays that included the Persai. We do not hear of Sophokles competing in the tragic contests until 468. Therefore, if one believes that the plays were not connected in any way, one must also believe that Suidas was mistaken and that Aischylos, not Sophokles, was the first to write unconnected trilogies and tetralogies. Moreover, we know of no other occasion when Aischylos failed to relate closely in theme the tragedies of one trilogy and even in some way the satyr play. Accordingly, even though scholars find no indication of any continuity of plot throughout the four plays that Aischylos produced in 472, yet some have attempted to demonstrate the possibility of a loose relationship existing among the subjects. See J. W. Donaldson, The Theatre of the Greeks (8th ed., London, 1875), pp. 118-119, and Gilbert Murray, Aeschylus: The Creator of Tragedy (Oxford, 1940), pp. 112-114. Broadhead (op. cit., p. lx) has this to say: "On the whole,
The suggestion is sometimes made that the *Persai* as we know it is not the play presented in Athens in 472 but that it contains interpolations from a later revised text, or is itself the second edition, used for the staging of the tragedy in Sicily. This theory arises from the desire to account for irrelevancies and inconsistencies in the *Persai*, but these features can be explained in other ways and the evidence for a variant edition is, as H. D. Broadhead puts it, "too slight to make it more than a possibility." I have therefore assumed the text of this tragedy to be the one Aischylos originally intended for Athenian spectators.

I think, we shall do well to accept Smyth's verdict" (here he cites Smyth, *Aeschylus* [Loeb ed.], p. xxiv):" 'the degrees of inter-connexion may well have varied; in the case of the *Persians*, which is interposed between dramas of legendary character, it is probable that the free form of composition was deliberately preferred'. At any rate, in view of our ignorance of the contents of the other tragedies, and in view of the exceptional subject of the *Persae*, this is the safest conclusion. It need not be denied that all three were broadly connected with the 'Europe v. Asia' motif, but each play seems to have been a complete unity in itself."

5. These passages are 845-851, 465-71, 796, 480-514.
The first question that one must ask in regard to the *Persai* is this: does the spirit in which Aischylos handled the contemporary material indicate that he was concerned primarily with creating a genuine tragedy or does it show, as some scholars maintain, that he was merely presenting in the form of tragedy what was in reality an exultant celebration of the Hellenic triumph over the Persians? Opinions vary considerably. For example, C. J. Blomfield\(^7\) sees in the final lament between Xerxes and the Chorus a departure from the dignity of tragedy and an attempt to raise a laugh, and asserts that Aischylos' main aim was to put the Persians in the most ridiculous light in order to gratify the Athenians' greedy passion for glory. J. D. Craig\(^8\) also believes that Aischylos deliberately included certain comic and undignified features in the *Persai* with the intention of producing in the Athenian audience an attitude "of rejoicing in the misfortune of the enemy not of pitying it." On the other hand, Gilbert Murray\(^9\) states that Aischylos has overcome the fact that the *Persai* "was apparently a performance written to order for a public celebration" and has surmounted the inherent difficulties of the subject to produce a great tragedy. He has achieved this, Murray feels, through a heroic portrayal of the Persians and an emphasis on their defeat as the work of god, whereby

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he has exalted "the contemporary story to legendary greatness."

H. D. F. Kitto believes that, although "the Persae is not one of Aeschylus' best plays," one must nevertheless conclude that Aischylos "did not set out to compose, for the stage, a piece in celebration of Salamis and Plataea - a theme which might have made good epic - but to create drama, and nothing but drama, on the theme of hybris and its inevitable punishment. What patriotic celebration there is - and there is obviously some - is incidental."  

In deciding whether Aischylos did or did not intend the Persai to be a genuine tragedy, one must first recognize the difficulties that the unconventional subject of the Persai would necessarily have presented to the dramatist trying to create tragedy from it in Athens about 472. To quote Broadhead, "the catastrophic event was ... one that had happened only a few years before, an event of intense significance for the Greek world and to be recalled only with a deep glow of patriotic enthusiasm. Was it to be expected that a Greek audience would shed tears at the discomfiture and humiliation of the arrogant monarch who had attempted to reduce them to slavery? In view of all this it would be peculiarly difficult for the dramatist to create and to maintain the necessary tragic atmosphere."  


12. Broadhead, op. cit., p. xvi. The victory was especially significant to the Athenians, for Herodotos (VIII, 93, 1) tells us that,
difficulty with which Aischylos had to contend was the prejudiced attitude of his audience: the pride in their victory and the antipathy towards their would-be subjugators that rendered them likely to regard the Persian defeat more as a cause for exultation than as tragedy.

To quote Broadhead again, "according to Aristotle it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen ...: history deals with the particular, poetry rather with the universal ..., so that we can see how a person of given character will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity ... In other words, the characters depicted by tragedy, the actions and fortunes of the persons with whom it acquaints us, possess a typical and universal value. Now when a tragic poet derives the material for his 'plot' not from some well-known myth, but from recent events, he is not entirely

while Aigina was given credit for the most distinguished service at Salamis, Athens came next after Aigina. Moreover, discussing the battle from a more general point of view, Herodotos (VII. 139) attributes the victory at Salamis above all to the firm stand and resoluteness of the Athenians, and calls the Athenians the "saviours of Hellas." Although this view, as Herodotos here remarks, was probably not acceptable to the rest of the Hellenes, it was perhaps one held by the Athenians themselves.

13. Poetics, IX. 1-10.
free to mould that material to his purposes. He must adhere fairly closely to the facts of history; the real will tend to supplant the ideal, so that his scope for rising above the level of the particular is considerably reduced. Nevertheless, as Aristotle remarks, if he does take an historical subject, he can handle it as a poet, since there is nothing to prevent some real happenings from being

Aside from the difficulties it presents as contemporary history, the Persai possesses the additional drawback of not having a single character who could be featured either, to use Kitto's words, as "a strong central character whose mind or will animates the whole," or as a "predominating character whose existence serves as a constant point of reference." Xerxes is the only individual who can be singled out at all, and yet he cannot become a tragic figure in his own right, since the transgressions and defeat are those of the whole Persian force; he can be seen only as a fragment of the whole. Moreover, the attention must be divided between him and the whole force.

It can be shown that Aischylos did attempt to overcome the inherent obstacles in order to produce a genuine tragedy. He has

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16. Since Broadhead's edition of the Persai (the most recent one in English) includes an extensive commentary on this topic, I have given what is essentially a summary of his views, while, with reference to Kitto, emphasizing the religious content of the Persai more than Broadhead does.
clearly striven (by careful selection and emphasis and without too much distortion of the truth) to adapt particular, historical facts to the conveying of a religious message of universal significance; this is in accordance with his usual tragic purpose. The message in this case is that of the ultimate triumph of Justice as revealed in Zeus' punishment of the sin of hybris, a principle that is central to Aischylos' vision of life. Accordingly, Aischylos pictures Xerxes, the rash young king of the Persians, as bringing about his own downfall and that of his nation by his presumptuous and unforgivable act of bridging the Hellespont, of thinking to gain mastery over the gods by casting a yoke upon the neck of Poseidon, god of the sea. The incident itself is mentioned more than once, in connection both with Xerxes himself and with the whole Persian force, and the words for "yoke" and "yoked" are scattered throughout the play as if forming a motif. In addition, Aischylos brings it to our attention that when they came to Hellas the Persian army as a whole displayed a flagrant disregard for the divine powers in their burning of the temples and shrines of the Hellenic gods and for this display of presumptuous pride they are destined to suffer at Plataia additional woes to those experienced at Salamis (lines 809-822). Finally, distorting facts a little for his tragic purpose, Aischylos idealizes the character of Dareios and blackens that of Xerxes: Xerxes alone passes the divinely ordained bounds and brings down the wrath of the gods. As Kitto remarks,

"Darius cannot be allowed to have passed these bounds, or the judgment of Heaven would have fallen on him. Darius must therefore be wise and prudent; he must scrupulously have respected this law."\textsuperscript{18}

It is quite clear that Aischylos did not, despite some critics, try to encourage Athenian prejudice but that he tried to deal with his subject as sympathetically as possible and consistently kept as his main goal the most effective representation of his tragic message; it is only when passages are plucked out of context that they can be used to imply that Aischylos had any other purpose in mind. Stressing only the religious significance of the defeat of the Persians and discouraging any strong feelings of personal pride that the Athenians might have, Aischylos nowhere attributes the victory of the Hellenes to their own prowess but attributes it simply to the ill-will of the gods toward the Persians for their arrogant and impious behaviour. For example, it is an evil spirit that causes the beginning of the utter rout of the Persians at Salamis (line 354) and a god that brings the Hellenes glory in the battle (line 454). Furthermore, the heavy blow that the Persians received at the Strymon had nothing to do with the Hellenes but was the work of the gods alone (lines 495 and 514). Broadhead is justified, therefore, in saying that, "if the story of the frozen Strymon is the poet's invention, it is a dramatically effective illustration of how divine Providence controls events and it betrays no

\textsuperscript{18} Kitto, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 41.
gloating over a defeated enemy." Also, one may note that, refraining from naming a single Hellene, Aischylos describes the naval battle (in lines 408-428) with remarkable impartiality and restraint, thus maintaining the atmosphere fitting to what was "primarily the presentation of the Persian tragedy as seen through Persian eyes." Aischylos' portrayal of the Persians is consistent throughout the Persai with the desire to illustrate most dramatically his tragic message; it does not reflect any attempt to arouse feelings against the Persians. For example, in conveying the spectacle of the wealth, splendour, and power of the Persian nation, the despotic control of their king and the deferential reverence displayed toward the royal family, and in attributing to them the use of strange forms of Greek words and long, impressive-sounding names, the dramatist is painstakingly creating an atmosphere that not only makes the Oriental characters and setting seem as authentic and convincing as possible but also, by emphasizing the height from which the Persians fall, makes their fate carry a powerful impact. In addition, passages in which Aischylos uncharacteristically makes the Persians act or speak in a way that is more suggestive of Hellenic behaviour or thought than of Persian are so fitted into context and carry meaning of such universal significance.

20. See Broadhead, op. cit., pp. xviii-xix, for a more detailed discussion.
as to indicate that Aischylos wished them to contribute to, not detract from, his main tragic purpose. Finally, it is possible to demonstrate the dramatic relevance and noble dignity of certain other "passages in which, according to some critics, a Persian is made to speak out of character merely in order to swell the pride of the audience, or in

22. For example, in referring to the critical attitude displayed by the Chorus toward Xerxes in the final scene (907-1037), Broadhead (op. cit., pp. xxv-xxvi) comments: "Has not the poet imported into their speech something of the outspokenness that was characteristic of democratic Athens? This is not unlikely, and Kranz is probably right in saying that here the voice of the Chorus is the voice of the poet.... Compare the way in which Darius is portrayed as the model ruler by whose standard of wise government Xerxes is to be judged, who passes very severe judgment on his son's actions, and warns the Chorus that by their admonitions they must prevail on Xerxes to cease offending Heaven (830-1). Nevertheless it is not altogether unnatural that the Chorus should openly express their feelings to their humiliated King, since he acknowledges his responsibility for the misfortunes he has brought upon his people (933-4). However that may be, if the poet has made Chorus or Darius to be his mouthpiece, the utterances spring from the poet's deep convictions on life and are quite incompatible with a satiric or contemptuous tone." Earlier (p. xvi), Broadhead says about the scene in which Dareios prophesies future disasters for the Persian people because of their impious behaviour
which it was the aim of the poet to satirise or pour scorn on the Persians.\textsuperscript{23}

Accordingly, therefore, one may conclude that throughout the \textit{Persai} Aischylos strove to mould his material to the religious theme of the play, even deviating a little from historical fact for the purpose of developing this theme as effectively as possible; at the same time, he avoided any deliberate arousal of patriotic feelings, either through distortion of events to exaggerate the prowess of the Hellenes or through the inclusion of irrelevant material pointing to the glory of Hellas and Athens or ridiculing the Persians. In other words, Aischylos attempted in the \textit{Persai} to produce as genuine a tragedy as possible.

The next question that arises is, to what extent did Aischylos succeed in this aim? Here, one must answer that, if he had had only two inherent difficulties with which to contend, he might have succeeded. As it was, he was defeated by the third, the lack of a strong central character. One's attention is shifted from the arrogance, splendour, and wealth of the whole Persian force at the beginning to (800-20), "If the doctrine is Greek, it takes no account of national differences - it concerns equally both Greek and barbarian."

23. Broadhead, \textit{op. cit.}, p. xix. These scenes include, to use Broadhead's designations, "Atossa's enquiries about Athens (230-45)," "Atossa's concern for Xerxes' robes (845-8)" and "the final scene (907-1076)."
the downfall and desolate appearance of Xerxes alone at the end; throughout the play, moreover, there are countless shiftings of emphasis back and forth between the army and Xerxes.

What is more, Xerxes, who comes closest to being a main character of the drama, is not a heroic figure nor does he have any redeeming features. According to Finley, he falls into the lowest moral class of Aischylean heroes, "those who are dominantly moved by imperiousness and self-will" and have almost no justification for their actions. Certainly, Xerxes' rash and impetuous attack on Hellas (in which he used such a huge force that he had to bridge the Hellespont to get them across, thus sinfully breaking through mortal bounds and calling down divine wrath upon himself and his race) seems to be motivated by nothing other than the desire to gain glory for himself. And, indeed, one is not inclined to regard as good or noble or heroic the man who originally sets out on an ill-advised venture simply because he has been finally prevailed upon by others, who have taunted him with charges of cowardice and of failure to live up to his father's achievements (lines 753 - 758), and who hastens forth in a headstrong manner with no thought of the consequences. There is, in other words, no building up of Xerxes as a strong and heroic figure being forced by circumstances in addition to his own character to make a fatal decision that leads him to a doom that he would otherwise not deserve. He is

mentioned only once (line 144) as the leader of the invading Persian force before he becomes the defeated general (line 299) who has lost vast numbers of his men in the disaster inflicted upon them at Salamis. After that we hear almost nothing of him but criticism and finally see him in the sorry state to which he has been reduced by the gods, deprived of all the usual splendid trappings of Persian royalty, dressed in ragged clothes, and accompanied by only a few men out of the formerly powerful and magnificent host that had accompanied him into Hellas.

Accordingly, since divine retribution in the *Persai* does not fall upon any strong central heroic character who could earlier have won the admiration of the Athenians, the audience could not have compassionately viewed the divinely imposed defeat in this play as really tragic. In the *Persai* the building of the character who was to suffer a downfall as truly heroic and admirable was more necessary than in plays with mythical themes, for in the case of the *Persai* the prejudice of the audience had to be counteracted. Therefore, the dramatist's impartial portrayal of events, which might seem to us sympathetic in contrast to the biased account he might have given, and his emphasis upon the high position from which the Persians fell, were not enough. In the *Persai* Aischylos could not have transported the Athenians so far beyond the prejudiced limits of their race as to make them regard the Persians as universal tragic figures instead of their defeated enemy and to make them completely forget their own feelings of pride in accomplishment and of joyous thankfulness for the victory over this enemy. At the same time, however, since he kept direct
reference to the battles down to a relatively small amount of space and did achieve an impartial presentation, it is probable that Aischylos was able with such scenes as the disaster at the Strymon and Xerxes' return to Sousa to bring home to the Athenians a realization of the Persian viewpoint and of the sadness involved in the Persians' broken confidence and fallen splendour.

While there is no reason to believe that the *Persai* as a sad spectacle of a fallen nation failed to move the Athenians, it is unlikely that it was regarded by them as genuine tragedy. The particular significance of the Persian defeat to the Athenians would have made this difficult and the lack of any figure of truly heroic proportions must have made it almost impossible. Yet, although in our eyes the nature of the theme he had selected made failure to create a really tragic drama almost certain, Aischylos seems to have been striving to make the *Persai* as tragic and universal as possible. But surely he was experienced enough in 472 (he won his first victory as early as 484) to understand the capacities of his audience and the difficulties involved in the chosen subject. Besides, he had already seen the same theme handled not long before by Phrynichos in the *Phoinissai*. From this he should have been able to judge the potentialities of his theme for the purpose of tragedy and to realize that the Persian overthrow could probably never form the subject of a genuine tragedy. This leads one to wonder why Aischylos, the tragedian, selected the defeat of the Persians by the Hellenes as a subject to be dealt with
in a "tragedy." 25

There are several possible answers to this question. To begin with, he may, on seeing Phrynichos' Phoinissai, have conceived an interest in the unusual subject of that play and felt the desire to improve on Phrynichos' treatment of it. This is especially possible if Phrynichos' Phoinissai consisted mainly of "lyrical lamentation - at which we know Phrynichos excelled" 26 - and, therefore, involved a conception of tragedy with which Aischylos did not agree. At any rate, although we do not know enough about the Phoinissai to be sure of the way in which Phrynichos handled the theme, we do have reason to believe that Aischylos in his Persai treated the subject of the Phoinissai in quite a different manner. 27 While Aischylos may have

25. Murray (op. cit., p. 114) suggests that by analogy with various types of annual commemorations of the Persian Wars there may have been a regular celebration of the same theme at the Great Dionysia every year between 478 and 472. But the events he describes have nothing in common with a possible repetition of the same theme in tragedy each year.


27. We know from Glaukos (Argumentum ad Persas) that the first lines of both plays were almost identical. But this does not justify E. T. Owen's (The Harmony of Aeschylus [Toronto, 1953], p. 21) statement that "How closely Aeschylus followed Phrynichus, it is of course impossible to say, but the Glaucus whom the writer quotes seems to imply that there was considerable verbal resemblance." There is no
realized that he could never overcome the theme's inherent weaknesses as far as tragedy was concerned, he could have wanted to see how close to tragedy he could bring a drama formed about a contemporary theme.

reason on the basis of one citation to believe that Aischylos verbally followed Phrynichos' Phoinissai any more closely than to make his first line similar to Phrynichos' as an open acknowledgement of his debt. A. W. Verrall("The Part of Phrynichus in the Persae of Aeschylus," Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society, LXXIX [Lent term, 1908], pp. 13-15) believes that Aischylos incorporated certain passages in toto from Phrynichos' Phoinissai, especially 465-471 and 480-514, probably as a tribute to the previous poet, but there is no proof of this. Besides, there are several important differences between the two plays: the Phoinissai begins with a prologue by a eunuch, while the Persai opens with the councillors deliberating about the possible fate of the king and the Persian forces; in the Phoinissai, the defeat of the Persian fleet is announced at the beginning, while in the Persai mention of the disaster is postponed until the hopes and anxieties of those remaining in Persia have been revealed to the spectator; finally, the chorus in the Phoinissai was composed of Phoenician women, that in the Persai of the Persian Elders.
Another possibility is that Aischylos, who was intensely interested in conveying through his tragedies his vision of the relationship existing between gods and man and of the bounds within which man should act, saw immediately how effective the subject used by Phrynichos in the Phoinissai could be for this purpose. Certainly, in this respect its contemporary nature and strong significance to the Athenian people must have given it, in the words of A. E. Haigh,28 "a directness which no legend could hope to equal." In portraying a fate that could have been that of the Athenians themselves had the gods so willed, Aischylos perhaps meant to provide a specific warning that the Athenians should not let their military successes lead them into the presumptuous pride that would bring about their own downfall. This purpose may have made Aischylos feel that the inadequacy of the material for genuine tragedy was unimportant.

There is yet another possibility: Aischylos may have chosen the subject of the Persai partly because he realized that through its dramatic portrayal he could remind the Athenians of Themistokles and the services he had earlier rendered to his country. Not only do the contents of the Persai give indications that Aischylos had the intention of indirectly praising Themistokles but also we are certain that Themistokles was in need of friendly propaganda at this time.

As far as the contents of the *Persai* are concerned, Aischylos in it featured above all other battles the one at Salamis, that is, the one in which Themistokles had distinguished himself and in which his naval policy had been obviously justified; Aischylos knew that the mere mention of this battle would remind the Athenians of Themistokles. What is more, he included in the *Persai* a description (353-363) of Themistokles' famous stratagem to force Xerxes to fight in a location advantageous to the Hellenes (incidentally, the only mention in the play of a single Hellenic individual's exploit); although he ascribed Themistokles' clever idea to an evil spirit, Aischylos knew that it would still remain in the Athenian minds the stratagem of Themistokles. One might add that attributing the stratagem to a divine being, far from obscuring Themistokles' authorship of it, could have served only to lend his act a more dramatic and impressive quality. There may be an indication that Aischylos' aim was to help Themistokles insofar as he makes no mention of the fact that the decision to take action on the following day had already been made by Xerxes before he received Themistokles' message.\(^{29}\) One can conjecture that Aischylos omitted this in order to place all the emphasis on Themistokles' device as the motivating force behind the undertaking of the sea-fight at that time, instead of as the cause of Xerxes' taking extra precautionary measures during the night. In addition, it is worth noting that Aischylos' emphasis on Themistokles' stratagem might have had an

\(^{29}\) Herodotos, I. 70 and 75.
even more specific purpose than merely to refresh the memories of the Athenians about Themistokles' part in the battle of Salamis. Epistle 11 of the letters of "Themistokles", as Lenardon notes, tells us that Themistokles was at some time after the battle charged with having committed treason at Salamis. This may have been the result of his enemies' interpreting the despatch of a message to Xerxes as an attempt to help Xerxes, just as Themistokles himself did later to his own advantage when writing to Artaxerxes, the Persian King. Aischylos may have been attempting in the Persai, by having the Persians regard this scheme as that of an evil spirit, to stress that it was directed against Xerxes. On the other hand, since the passage under discussion is relevant within its context, Aischylos may not have deliberately included it in order to remind the Athenians of their debt to Themistokles. However, in the light of the significance it held for the Athenians, that he included it at all is noteworthy.

Furthermore, the Athenians could not have played the important part that they did play in the battle at Salamis if Themistokles had not earlier persuaded them to build a fleet, and perhaps Aischylos is reminding them of this fact when the chorus remarks: ἄργυρον πηγή τις αὐτοῖς ἐστι, θησαυρὸς χθονός (line 240). Broadhead tells us that "the scholiast in M refers to the mines at Laurium and Thoricus. For the former cf. Hdt. VII, 144, where we learn how

31. Thucydides, I. 137. 4.
Themistokles persuaded the Athenians to forego their share of the revenue from the mines and spend the money on building ships for the war against Aégina, a war, Hdt. adds, that was the salvation of Greece, ἀναγκάσας θαλασσίους γενέσθαι Ἀθηναίους.

So this reference to the mines would have a deep significance for the audience. Since Themistokles' proposal had caused much opposition at the time and since those who had argued against it had later been proved so wrong, the Athenians upon hearing the reference could well have thought of Themistokles and their debt to him. But, again, while Aischylos must have realized the significance of this allusion for the Athenians, since it is relevant within its context there is no indication that he included it specifically in order to remind them of Themistokles.

Finally, the shortness of Aischylos' reference in line 817 to the battle at Plataia, predominantly a Lakedaimonian victory, is thought by some scholars to be due to the "influence of Themistokles and his anti-Spartan policy." This is possible, but it could also be construed as an attempt to preserve dramatic unity by stressing only the defeat of the Persians at Salamis or even as a tribute to the Lakedaimonians.

33. Broadhead, op. cit., p. 204.
35. Broadhead, op. cit., p. 204.
As to Themistokles' position at the time of the production of the *Persai*, we know that he was ostracised in the late 470's, after already having been tried for treason, and was afterwards once more charged with medism and went into exile, but there is much controversy and uncertainty over the dates of these events. R. J. Lenardon\(^\text{36}\) has recently suggested a chronological framework for this part of Themistokles' life that is more convincing than others\(^\text{37}\) and that, combined with W. A. Forrest's\(^\text{38}\) reconstruction of events during these years, provides us with the following outline. After his first trial,\(^\text{39}\) Themistokles enjoyed a brief respite from the attacks of his enemies, and was then ostracised about 474/3. He went to Argos and from there

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37. His interpretation of Cornelius Nepos, *Aristeides*, 3, is questionable, and he cannot, because of the nature of the evidence, prove his conclusions. But he bases his thesis upon a careful study of the sources and in doing so resolves some of the important problems of Themistoklean chronology.

38. "Themistokles and Argos," *Class. Quart.*, X (1960), pp. 221-241. One can fit Forrest's reconstruction of events into Lenardon's chronology without affecting Forrest's arguments or the import of his reconstruction.

travelled around the Peloponnese; the result of his activities during this time is probably to be seen in the formation of an "anti-Spartan, democratic League in the northern Peloponnese, including Argos (with Kleonai), Arkadia (with both Tegea and Mantinea), and Elis," whose first operations were an attack on Mykenai and the battle of Tegea. At some time during his stay in Argos, "proof" of his treasonable intentions, evidently involving collaboration with Pausanias, was "discovered" by the Lakedaimonians after Pausanias' death. The alleged proof, according to Plutarch's account, consisted of letters and documents found among Pausanias' possessions that revealed a knowledge on Themistokles' part of Pausanias' treacherous dealings with the King of Persia against Hellas. If such documents were authentic, and not fabricated by the Lakedaimonians, Themistokles' crime apparently consisted mainly of keeping Pausanias' traitorous scheme a secret rather than of engaging in such activities himself. As Plutarch relates, Themistokles had rejected Pausanias' invitation to enter into a partnership with him on these undertakings. In actual fact, it is impossible for us to be sure whether any communication took place between Pausanias and Themistokles and, if it did, to what extent Themistokles conspired with Pausanias. Undoubtedly, Themistokles'

40. Thucydides, I. 135. 3.
41. Forrest, op. cit., p. 232; see also p. 229.
42. Thucydides, I. 135. 2; Plutarch, Themistokles, 23; Diodoros, XI. 54.
reputation for unscrupulousness and his association with Argos, a city which was believed to have been in sympathy with the enemy during the Persian Wars, lent weight to the charge, whether it was true or not. At any rate, in 471/0 (according to Lenardon's chronology) the Athenians were convinced by the Lakedaimonians' accusations, and a group of them set out for Argos with the Lakedaimonians in order to arrest Themistokles. When they arrived there, however, Themistokles had fled into exile.

If one considers that, influenced perhaps by a suspicion of medism on his part, the Athenians in 474/3 had ostracized Themistokles and that in 471/0 they were ready immediately to co-operate with the Lakedaimonians in arresting him, it is reasonable to assume that public opinion was against him in late 473 or early 472, when the Persai was being written. Aware of his increased activity in the Peloponnese, the Lakedaimonians were probably already making accusations, and in Athens there were perhaps ominous murmurings against him. In addition, it is possible that Pausanias by this time had been put to death (even though the evidence allegedly found among Pausanias' possessions was not brought forth against Themistokles until his second trial in 471/0).

43. See Forrest, op. cit., p. 238, where he suggests that the Spartans may have delayed in producing the evidence they were supposed to have found. Of course, this is plausible only if one assumes that the evidence was fabricated or that they waited until they were sure it would have effect or both.
and it may have appeared that the same fate threatened to overtake Themistokles, since he also was strongly suspected by some of friendship with the Persians.

Aischylos' Persai, therefore, a play which could not but have reminded the Athenians of the great debt they owed to Themistokles in their fight against the Persians, appeared at a time when Themistokles was in need of support. 44 This may have been coincidence; there is no evidence to prove otherwise. At the same time, one cannot deny that it may have been more than mere coincidence, especially since we have already seen that Aischylos in two of his extant plays with mythological subjects did not hesitate to communicate his ideas on contemporary politics, undoubtedly with a view to influencing the Athenian spectators. Furthermore, the views he expressed in those

44. Even if one places the ostracism in 471/0 and the flight about 469/8, as Forrest does, the argument for the pertinence in 472 of a play aimed at helping Themistokles is not significantly affected. The Lakedaimonians were enemies of Themistokles from as early as 479, after the Athenian walls were built. Moreover, in 477 there was a "definite indication of his fall from popular favour" (Lenardon, Historia, VIII [1959], p. 33) in his defeat by Aristeides in his plan to burn the fleet at Pagasai (already mentioned above, p. 64). Evidence of the existence of hostility against Themistokles about the time of the Persai is furnished by his first trial on the charge of medism; even in Forrest's chronology this could not have taken place much after the Persai, since it preceded the ostracism, which he places in 471/0, and it may have taken place before the Persai.
plays were in accordance with those of Themistokles. In addition, there seems to have been a tradition that Aischylos, along with his brother Ameinias, was a friend of Themistokles. If Aischylos in the Persai was trying to help Themistokles, it is not surprising that he gave no positive evidence of it; if Themistokles was in danger, to have connected himself too openly with him could have endangered Aischylos himself.

I have presented three motives that might have influenced Aischylos in his selection of a contemporary, and therefore unconventional, subject for the Persai: the urge to meet the challenge of handling a different theme in a more effective way than had a previous dramatist;

45. In the Suppliants and the Eumenides Aischylos reveals his recommendation and approval of a treaty with Argos to afford protection against Sparta. The recognition of Sparta as Athens' true enemy and the formation of an alliance with Argos was Themistoklean policy long before it became Athenian policy. It is possible that Aischylos had perceived Themistokles' foresight as early as 472, although the Suppliants was probably not produced until 463.

46. This tradition is revealed in the letters of "Themistokles," which I have discussed above, p. 10.

47. Also, that Perikles, who later "inherited many of Themistokles' ideas, and much of his policy" (Forrest, op. cit., p. 233), was choregos for one of Aischylos' plays, perhaps the Persai (I.G. II² 2318; but see Lattimore, op. cit., pp. 82-93), at least does not argue against the writing of the Persai for Themistokles' sake.
the desire to convey a religious message of direct significance for
the Athenians; the wish to help one who may have been a friend and
who was certainly a fellow-patriot now in trouble. Aischylos was a
dramatist who wrote on many levels, and in the case of the Persai all
three suggested reasons for his selection of its subject, since they
are compatible with one another, could have influenced him in varying
degrees. Perhaps, after all, we should regard Aischylos' Persai simply
as a natural product of a time in which a citizen viewed as part of
his fundamental existence religion and politics insolubly bound to­
gether, a combination which has in the hands of artists in many
different countries and in many different ages found an expression
in drama.
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