

# An Alternative Date for Sophocles' *Antigone*

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**T**HIS PAPER suggests that the generally accepted dating of *Antigone* in the late 440's is insecure, and proposes an alternative possibility: that it was first produced in 438. The argument for that too is not altogether solid, depending as it does on a special interpretation of evidence normally used for the conventional dating, in combination with a fairly conservative reading of a textually unstable and frequently over-emended passage from the ancient *Life* of Sophocles. As we have it this is a late Hellenistic compilation, probably accumulated in layers from various sources, which undoubtedly purveys a great deal of rubbish.<sup>1</sup> It also seems, however, to contain a measure of sound information, and the particular item in question is difficult in its essentials to impugn or discard. There is anyhow a *prima facie* case to discuss. Together with the rest of our evidence about the historical context, the redating inevitably has implications, not so much for our understanding of the play as drama, but for our view of Sophocles' motives and intentions, and on these too suggestions are offered—in full awareness that there is room for difference of opinion.

## *The Year*

Argument for traditional dating is familiar, and vulnerable. The *Hypothesis* attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium records the view that “esteem from his production of *Antigone* earned Sophocles appointment as general on Samos.”<sup>2</sup> Androton (*FGrHist* 324F38=Σ

<sup>1</sup> Analysis centres on (a) the *Hypothesis* to *Antigone* attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium; (b) §9 of the anonymous *Life of Sophocles*, in its extant version hardly earlier than the second century A.D., but in part derived from much earlier material (F. Leo, *Die griechisch-römisch Biographie* [Leipzig 1901] 22f). For the point here at issue these two works may easily offer variants of the same item derived ultimately from the same original source (nn.2, 21 *infra*). For critique of the *Life* see M. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets* (Baltimore 1981) 75–87, who reviews all the main questions; I differ over some of the answers, but there is scope for that.

<sup>2</sup> Hyp. *Ant.* 1, φασὶ δὲ τὸν Σοφοκλέα ἠξιώσθαι τῆς ἐν Σάμῳ στρατηγίας εὐδοκμήσαντα ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῆς Ἀντιγόνης; cf. Radt, *TrGF* IV 44f. To reject this rules out any

Aristides p.485 Dindorf) includes him in his list of “generals on Samos,” apparently for 441/0. Production at the City Dionysia of 441 is however unlikely on two counts. The first is not overwhelming. What limited evidence we have indicates that normally the annual strategic elections preceded the City Dionysia. Irregular postponement to a date after that festival evidently could certainly occur, but nothing suggests that it may have happened in 441. It might still be conceded, if nothing more were required,<sup>3</sup> but to put the play in that year also necessitates the additional belief that it was not one of a winning entry in the dramatic competition, known from the *Marmor Parium* (FGrHist 239A.60) to have been won by Euripides. That too is theoretically possible but far less likely; for most scholars the conjunction of both presuppositions together involves too much unwarranted hypothesis. The standard alternative is to accept the consequent gap between the successful première and Sophocles’ election as general but for obvious reasons to minimise it and so date the play to the City Dionysia of 442.

This however in my view holds good only if the chief *hellenotamias* named in the tribute list of 443/2 B.C. (— — —]οφοκλῆς Κολο[— — —) is not the poet. That has been maintained, on the grounds that the earliest attested (fourth-century) demotic of the poet (and of others from Kolonos) is always given as ἐκ Κολωνοῦ, not possible on the stone. There Κολονόθεν could be restored, but is attested late and weakly, whereas Κολονῆθεν is the regular demotic of two other demes both named Κολωναί. Arguably therefore the poet and treasury official are different persons. However, the existence of the variant form Κολονόθεν in the fifth century is not in the least unlikely. What *is* in the highest degree implausible is the existence of two persons named Sophocles of the same social, financial, and political standing required to hold either of these offices and belonging to almost homonymous demes—whereas for one person to progress quickly from this treasurership to the *strategia* is natural, plausible, and paralleled.<sup>4</sup> In

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attempt at dating whatever—a theoretical option, but patently sterile and almost certainly wrong.

<sup>3</sup> Arist. *Ath.Pol.* 44.4 (with P. J. Rhodes, *Historical Commentary* [Oxford 1981] 537) notes fourth-century practice, whereby the strategic elections were “held in the first prytany after the sixth in which there were good omens,” and therefore normally in the seventh, which only rarely indeed, if ever, could include Elaphebolion 18, the first possible day for an election after the City Dionysia. However, Aristotle’s is perhaps not ideal evidence for the mid-fifth century, and at that date, before the adoption of the Metonic cycle, correlation of the civic and conciliar years—difficult enough for the later period—is even more hazardous. For a valiant attempt at further penetration, L. Woodbury, *Phoenix* 24 (1970) 218–23.

<sup>4</sup> The inscription is *IG I<sup>2</sup> 202*; cf. *ATL* II 18, III 68; R. MEIGGS, *The Athenian*

strict logic, of course, to deny identity is not quite out of the question, but for practical purposes the case for accepting it is overwhelmingly more persuasive.

That persuasion, I believe, makes it impossible to date *Antigone* to the City Dionysia of 442. It will not do to dismiss the office of *hellenotamias* as a sinecure unlikely to be taken very seriously by the genial poet or to interfere with the more demanding business of dramatic composition and presentation.<sup>5</sup> For one thing, Antiphon's speech *On the Murder of Herodes* refers to the condemnation of a whole board of *hellenotamiai*, all of whom but one were executed before the charge was found to be false, an incident unlikely to encourage negligent insouciance in later boards and which probably occurred before 443.<sup>6</sup> Second, it is very difficult to believe that the board of 443/2 was not intimately involved in that year's abnormal reassessment of allied tribute, not due until 442/1. A measure of reorganisation resulted, but only minor alterations in levies.<sup>7</sup> It might perhaps be conjectured that it was one purpose of this premature revision in the wake of the ostracism of Thucydides son of Melesias (443), whose criticisms of Pericles had stressed his use of tribute to finance his spectacular building-programme in Athens, to reassure the allies that there would be no marked increase to fund yet more projects for the greater glory of the imperial city and its quasi-Olympian leader.<sup>8</sup> Appointment to the board—indeed apparently to head it—of Sophocles the poet, while no proof of political sympathy with

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*Empire* (Oxford 1972 [hereafter 'Meiggs']) 244f; V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford 1954) 120f. For a careful account of the evidence, D. M. Lewis, *BSA* 50 (1955) 12–17 (but see also B. D. Meritt, *AJP* 80 [1959] 189); undue scepticism in H. C. Avery, *Historia* 22 (1973) 509ff; commonsense in P. Karavites, *Klio* 58 (1976) 359–65; see now also D. Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica* (Princeton 1986) 73f, showing some variation in the formation of deme-names, especially in the fifth century. For progression from *hellenotamias* to general, compare Pericles the younger in 410/09 (M./L. 84); 407/6 (?) (*IG* I<sup>3</sup> 117; M./L. 91); 406/5 (Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.16f, 29; 7.16f, 21; Diod. 12.74.1).

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Ehrenberg (*supra* n.4) 136, despite his belief that the post was one "of great responsibility"; Woodbury (*supra* n.3) 223. Orthodox dating goes back to Wilamowitz, *Aristoteles und Athen* II (Berlin 1893) 298 n.14, logical but incomplete (recapitulated by W. M. Calder III, *GRBS* 10 [1968] 389f). See also K. Reinhardt, *Sophokles* (Frankfurt am Main 1933) 251f, resolutely agnostic. The most persuasive statement of the orthodox dating is in G. Müller's edition of *Antigone* (Heidelberg 1967) 24f, but it incorporates special emendation and interpretation of *V.Soph.* 9.

<sup>6</sup> Antiph. 5.69–71. The speech dates later than 427, perhaps as late as 416–414. This passage asks the *older* jurymen to recall the incident.

<sup>7</sup> Meiggs 244 on *IG* I<sup>2</sup> 202.

<sup>8</sup> Meiggs 121, 132f, 139, 155ff, 186, on Plut. *Per.* 11, 12, 14; Cic. *Off.* 2.60; H. T. Wade-Gery, *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford 1958) 239–70. For Cimon's attitude towards the allies, Ion *FGrHist* 392F13; Plut. *Cim.* 11, 12, 16. On Pericles' policies, Meiggs 79, 85, 110, 132f, 139f, 155f, 176f, 189ff, 194, 197, 202f, 378f.

Pericles, might well contribute much to this end, if, as is altogether likely, he already enjoyed many friendships among leading citizens of Ionian and Aegean communities.<sup>9</sup> However that may be, if he was indeed *hellenotamias* in 443/2, in any case the task that year was surely no sinecure, to be discharged briskly in the early months, the remnant of the sailing (and campaigning) season, with ample leisure to follow for theatrical production. There is some reason to think that for one man to undertake both functions in the same year was well-nigh impossible. The poet's four plays might indeed already be written, or at least sketched, with sample passages to beguile the archon who was to accept them for the festival, but even after that (equally) there might remain substantial amounts of writing to be done, and in any case even to produce and direct them all—normally the task of the poet—would require very considerable time and effort, especially with a large amateur element in the cast. It was not without grounds that chorus members were excused from military service,<sup>10</sup> or that it was one of the first tasks of the archon in his year to decide which poets should compete in the following spring, and he would be a rash archon indeed who 'assigned a chorus' to a poet who was an elected *hellenotamias*, and a rash *hellenotamias* who applied for one.<sup>11</sup> Quite apart from special tasks such as tribute-reorganisation in 443/2, which might perhaps have been foreordained, there was in any case the risk of sudden administrative, financial, military, or political crisis in autumn or winter. Besides, it was precisely at the City Dionysia in the spring that the *hellenotamiai* were responsible for receiving and receipting the tribute from the allies.<sup>12</sup> Their intimate

<sup>9</sup> For Ion of Chios, G. Huxley, *GRBS* 5 (1965) 129–46; M. L. West, *BICS* 32 (1985) 71–78; F. Jacoby, *CQ* 41 (1947) 16f; *FGrHist* 392 T5b, F6; *V.Soph.* 20 (emended). For Ion's relations with Cimon, F13; cf. T5a, FF14, 15; for Cimon and Sophocles, Plut. *Cim.* 8. Possibly a compliment to Cimon's memory at Soph. *OT* 158; cf. Σ Aeschin. 1.128, Paus. 1.17.1, on the shrine of PHEME erected to commemorate Cimon's victory at Eurymedon—in *OT* a "daughter of Elpis"—reminiscent of Cimon's half-sister Elpinice? For Sophocles and Herodotus, Plut. *Mor.* 785A; Soph. *Ant.* 904f (cf. Hdt. 3.119); *OT* 981 (cf. Hdt. 6.107.1); *OC* 337–41 (cf. Hdt. 2.35); *El.* 62, 417 (cf. Hdt. 4.95, 1.108). Note also *OT* 387 μάγον, common in Hdt. (Powell, *Lexicon*, s.v.; see also K. J. Rigsby, *GRBS* 17 (1976) 109–14, for the meaning 'political conspirator', probable here); for Hermesilaus, Sophocles' (and Ion's) host on Chios, Ion F6, where there also appears an 'Eritrean' (Erythraean?). For Cimon's 'circle', Meiggs 275.

<sup>10</sup> A. W. Pickard-Cambridge *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1968) 77, citing Dem. 21.15.

<sup>11</sup> Pickard-Cambridge (*supra* n.10) 75f, 86, citing especially *Ath.Pol.* 56.3 for early choice of χορηγοί, which implies also early selection and allocation to them of poets; see also 84 and evidence there cited.

<sup>12</sup> Pickard-Cambridge (*supra* n.10) 58, citing Aeschin.3.43, Dem. 21.74, Ar. *Ach.* 502–06; see also Meiggs 237.

involvement in dramatic production during their year of office is all but inconceivable.

These considerations, I think, virtually exclude 442 as a possible date for presentation of *Antigone* and its companion pieces. If however both 443/2 and 442/1 (see above) can thus most probably be eliminated, all the less likely also becomes the suggestion that the source of Aristophanes of Byzantium contrived the connection between the success of the play and election to the generalship simply from knowledge of the dates and argument *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, for to move the date further backwards to 444/3 or earlier *ipso facto* reduces the plausibility of this view. It is no improvement to shift the play down to 441/0, with another generalship in 440/39 (though the latter in the present state of the evidence remains a distinct possibility), for besides delayed elections (see *supra*), we also need to postulate sufficient leisure during the known military responsibilities of 441/0, which again one would have expected to disqualify the poet from competition that year. Transfer of the production from City Dionysia to the Lenaia (presumably of 442/1) is no remedy: there is no good evidence that there was any tragic competition at the Lenaia at all quite as early as this.<sup>13</sup>

Failure to find a wholly satisfactory date for *Antigone* before 439, together with the known end of the Samian war in that year and Sophocles' known absence from the board of generals for 439/8, who concluded the settlement with the Samians shortly afterwards,<sup>14</sup> might encourage the sceptical to abandon the evidence of the *Hypothesis* altogether. That would be over-hasty: there are other possibilities. Traditional dating turns on identification of the generalship on Samos mentioned in the *Hypothesis* with that attested for the Samian war, evidently in 441/0, by Androtion (F38) and implied for that year or the next, with a rôle in those operations, by Ion of Chios (F6). Of itself that combination is not unreasonable, but is not *necessary* and in the light of all other considerations is arguably incorrect.

Salient points from the story of the Samian war provide the essential context. The intransigence of the oligarchic government on Samos in the face of Athenian intervention in the island's war with Miletus brought a relatively mild reaction. Apparently in 441/0, Pericles with forty ships installed a democracy and a small garrison, taking oligar-

<sup>13</sup> Pickard-Cambridge (*supra* n.10) 40f, 112–14, 125 on *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 2325.

<sup>14</sup> *IG* I<sup>3</sup> 48 (M./L. 56), showing Dem[ocleides] as general for a tribe which in limited space on the stone can only be Aigeis, that of Sophocles, whatever generals' names are supplied. For doubts about them, C. W. Fornara, *The Athenian Board of Generals from 501 to 404* (= *Historia Einzelschr.* 16 [1971]) 50f.

chic hostages to Lemnos for internment.<sup>15</sup> The success of the Samian dissidents in rescuing them and mounting a counter-revolution at home, however, not to mention gaining the adherence of Byzantium, sympathy from Sparta (with probably much of the Peloponnesian League), and assistance from Pissouthnes, satrap of Sardis, posed an extremely serious threat to Athens' whole imperial position.<sup>16</sup> In the summer of 440 all-out war ensued for over eight months, evidently hard-fought and bitter.<sup>17</sup> At all events, the final settlement imposed by Athens was by no means lenient. Samos lost her walls, fleet, hostages, and a war-indemnity, while democracy was reimposed, this time firmly.<sup>18</sup> Diodorus (presumably from Ephorus) adds punishment of "the guilty"—evidently execution of those deemed responsible for the revolt—and Plutarch records public protest even at Pericles' celebrated funeral speech over the Athenian dead.<sup>19</sup> Not all the Samian oligarchs, however, were killed or captured. Significant numbers escaped to seize a defensible position at Anaia, not far away on the mainland opposite, and reappear in Thucydides under 428 and 413/2 as an irritant to Athens and a threat to the Samian democrats.<sup>20</sup>

There is however no necessity at all to infer that after 440/39 it had taken them anything like as long as twelve years to possess Anaia, or for the Athenians to move against them there, and neither supposition is in the least plausible. When we find in the manuscripts of the ancient *Life* of Sophocles the notice that the Athenians elected him general in his middle or late sixties (variant figures, corrupt), seven years before the Peloponnesian conflict in the war against the Anaians, on any reasonable view the poet's age must be corrected,<sup>21</sup> but

<sup>15</sup> Thuc. 1.115.2f; Diod. 12.27.1f; Plut. *Per.* 25.1–3.

<sup>16</sup> Thuc. 1.40.5, 115.4f, 8.76.4; *IG I<sup>3</sup>* 48.12.

<sup>17</sup> Thuc. 1.116f; Plut. *Per.* 28.1; Diod. 12.27.3–28.4.

<sup>18</sup> Thuc. 1.117.3; Plut. *Per.* 28.1; Diod. 12.28.3f; Nep. *Timoth.* 1.2; Isoc. 15.111. The costs of the war were enormous—over 1400 talents in *IG I<sup>2</sup>* 293 (M./L. 55); cf. G. F. Hill, *Sources for Greek History<sup>2</sup>* (Oxford 1951), 306f; Meiggs 192ff.

<sup>19</sup> Diod. 12.28.3, *κολάσας δὲ τοὺς αἰτίους*; Plut. *Per.* 28.6; cf. n.41 *infra*.

<sup>20</sup> Thuc. 3.19.2, 32.2; 4.75.1; 8.19.1, 61.2.

<sup>21</sup> *V. Soph.* 9, καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι δ' αὐτὸν ξθ' (v.l. ξε') ἐτῶν ὄντα στρατηγὸν εἶλοντο πρὸ τῶν Πελοποννησιακῶν ἔτεσιν ζ' ἐν τῷ πρὸς Ἀναίους πολέμῳ. For full apparatus, see Radt, *TrGF IV* 33. Variant readings and emendations abound. One method is to change the date to fit the (preferred) age and Thuc. 3.19 (*etc.*) on the Anaians in 428/7: thus G. Perotta, *Sofocle* (Messina 1935) 42, inserts <σπουδῶν> after Πελοποννησιακῶν; Kolisch deletes πρὸ, reading ἐτεῖ for ἔτεσιν. Another is to alter the date to fit the generalship on Samos—thus Bergk and Ribbeck (ἐννέα: η' or θ')—which presumably also requires a change in the age to suit, as πεντήκοντα πέντε (Lessing, Seidler) or νε' (Schultz, prob. Jacoby), with or without the further change Σαμίουσ for Ἀναίους (*vel. sim.*—see *infra*), as Seidler, Jebb (*cf. Σάμον*), Valckenauer. These expedients are unnecessarily radical. The best approach is that of Brunck, to emend the age only, reading πεντήκοντα ἑπτά (from νζ')—an evident palaeographic possibility. It is easy

there is no good case for altering the date—on exclusive reckoning 438/7, or inclusively 437/6—or for rejecting the evidence outright, though in accepting it we have to say that Sophocles (and his colleagues on that expedition, if any) achieved no permanent solution to the problem. Given a war between Athens and the Anaians at this time and given that Sophocles held a command in it, these years become new possibilities for dating *Antigone*.<sup>22</sup> That the *Hypothesis* locates ἐν Σάμῳ (not ἐπὶ or πρὸς Σάμον) the command which resulted from the production is no bar, but if anything confirmation, since Samos would quite certainly be the Athenian base for any such campaign.

Any attempt at closer chronology turns on somewhat more intricate argument. An ordinal numeral for the date in the *Vita* would require inclusive reckoning, but the cardinal actually used appears to allow both that and, perhaps rather more probable, exclusive reckoning also.<sup>23</sup> The other consideration is that we may suppose either a delay of eleven months between the play's presentation and the elections of the next year, or else that the elections were postponed and came only a short time after the festival, in the same year. By inclusive reckoning, then, we may have (i) production of *Antigone* 438, election spring 437, command 437/6; or (ii) production 437, election (postponed) 437, command 437/6. By exclusive reckoning we can add (iii) production 439, election 438, command 438/7; or (iv) production 438,

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enough to derive the erroneous ΑΥΤΟΝΞΘΕΤΩΝ (*αυτονξθετων*), and easier still the variant ΑΥΤΟΝΞΕΕΤΩΝ (*αυτονξεετων*), from an original ΑΥΤΟΝΝΖΕΤΩΝ (*αυτοννζετων*). It should be noted for completeness that the reading Ἐναίους is found in the margin of one MS. only (*cf.* Ἐναίους in its text and in one other), but is usually adopted for the more common readings, surely corrupt *per vitium Christianum*, ἀνανια, ἀνανιω, ἀναιαν, ἀρανικον, ἀνανιους. The emendations Ἐναίαν (Turnebus) and Ἐναίτας (Ritter, normative) are possible but again unnecessary. For very full (but not quite exhaustive) discussion of Sophocles' possible generalships, see Woodbury (*supra* n.3) 213–15, needlessly complex in my view. Some posit an even more chaotic state of affairs (*e.g.* T. B. L. Webster, *Introduction to Sophocles* [Oxford 1936] 17; Ehrenberg [*supra* n.4] 117 n.1; H. D. Westlake, *Hermes* 84 [1956] 110). The best analysis of the problem of the *Vita* may well still be that of Leo (*supra* n.1).

<sup>22</sup> Some advocates of traditional dating find in *Ant.* 1118f—κλυτὰν δὲ ἀμφέπεις Ἰταλίαν—a reference to Thurii and hence a *terminus post quem* in the middle 440's. If that approach is legitimate at all, better to take 1037–39, ἐμπολάτε τ' ἀπὸ Σάρδεων ἤλεκτρον, εἰ βούλεσθε, καὶ τὸν Ἰνδικὸν χρυσόν, as a reference to the aid given to Samian rebels in 440/39 by Pissouthnes. While without further support this is hardly completely convincing, if composition can be dated on independent grounds to 439/8, it is still very tempting to suppose that an Athenian audience at that time would take it as an allusion to Pissouthnes' activities. For Pericles' imperviousness to his bribes, see the stories in *Plut. Per.* 25.5f. On Pissouthnes, *supra* n.16.

<sup>23</sup> Compare for problems with dates on the *Marmor Parium* T. J. Cadoux, *JHS* 68 (1948) 83–86. In the *Vita* exclusive reckoning seems rather more likely.

election (postponed) 438, command 438/7. Of these theoretical possibilities (iii) is the most vulnerable. Great precision in our chronology of the Samian war is not attainable, but combination of the famous fragment of Ion of Chios with Thucydides does make it at least possible and perhaps rather likely that Sophocles was a general and involved in operations against Samos not only in 441/0, deducible from Androtion, but also in 440/39.<sup>24</sup> If so, in view of the seriousness of the war, not to mention his undoubted patriotism, one may question whether the poet, whatever his skills and facility, could have had the leisure to produce *Antigone* (if not also in large part to write it), together with two other tragedies and a satyr-play, for the City Dionysia of spring 439. Besides, while the eleven months' gap between production and election required both in this option and in (i) is not impossible, the causal relationship between them reported by Aristophanes of Byzantium makes far better sense if it is eliminated. The case against production in 437 followed quickly by election to command for 437/6 is if anything even more tenuous, but perhaps not quite weightless. Exclusive reckoning seems to be marginally prefer-

<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately there is no certainty. Thuc. 1.115.2 puts the start of the Samian troubles—apparently, *pace* A. W. Gomme, *Historical Commentary on Thucydides* I (Oxford 1945) 352, the first moves of the Samians against Miletus, rather than the later outbreak of serious fighting with Athens—“in the sixth year” after the peace of 446/5, which will yield nothing more precise than spring 440 for the first Athenian intervention. Samos fell “in the ninth month” (of the siege, it would seem), and the final treaty was sworn by the generals of 439/8—probably early in their year, since the scholiast to Ar. *Vesp.* 283 makes the war end in the archon year 440/39. There is no reason to suppose an unusually long interval between surrender and treaty, for Athens had recent and ample prior experience in drafting such settlements—although there may have been some debate over the terms in this case (46 *infra*). If it was not too long, the mission of Sophocles to get help from Chios and Lesbos, when he was certainly a general (Ion F6; normally taken with Thuc. 1.116.1f), could belong to the year 440/39 rather than 441/0. Further help came later from Chios and Lesbos, almost certainly in 440/39 (Thuc. 1.117.2), and there is no particular reason (except economy in handling the sources) why Sophocles' mission should not rather have been concerned with that. According to the *Vita* (1) Sophocles was general with not only Pericles, but also a prominent bearer of the name Thucydides—presumably supposed to be the son of Melesias rather than the historian. Neither supposition can be right, but the error might have originated in the fact of a generalship in 440/39 as colleague of a third and more obscure Thucydides recorded serving against Samos in Thuc. 1.117.2. Late and admittedly suspect evidence has the poet-general Sophocles defeated in battle by the Samian philosopher-general Melissus. If that is historical at all, it should belong in 440/39, during the absence from the main scene of operations of the commanders-in-chief on both sides, Pericles and Stesagoras (only *Suda*. s.v. *Μελίσσος*). See also Aristodemus *FGrHist* 104F15; Strab. 14.1.18 (both, for what they are worth, showing Sophocles with Pericles at the fall of Samos); Plut. *Per.* 26.2f; Ael. *VH* 7.14; Justin 3.6.12; Thuc. 1.116.3–117.1). This just might account for Pericles' low opinion of his military abilities in Ion F6 and perhaps also for his absence from the board of generals in 439/8.



able if the language of the *Vita* is interpreted quite literally—"before the Peloponnesian affair at an interval of seven years." By 437/6 it seems likely that Athenian foreign policy had settled down once more under Pericles' direction: in 438 things may have been rather less stable (see *infra*), which would readily account for a postponed strategic election.

The conclusion is that for the date of the first presentation of *Antigone* the balance of probability (in default of better criteria) excludes 442 and inclines against 441 in favour of 438, rather than 437. The probable subsequent (or consequent) appointment as general in that year does postulate postponement of strategic elections until after the Dionysia, but here that is no major obstacle: for *this* dating (unlike the argument for 441) no further presupposition is indispensable except faith in the evidence, of which this hypothesis makes the best sense. Besides, although in strict logic it settles nothing, in 438 we happen to know that Sophocles, perhaps having had more leisure for writing than for some time previously, or anyhow unhampered by strategic office in 439/8, won the Dionysiac contest. The source, focussed on the runner-up Euripides, unfortunately fails to name the plays, but from the arguments and evidence adduced so far nothing shows that *Antigone* was not one of them,<sup>25</sup> and we have seen some reason to suppose that it was.

### *Implications*

If the play should be redated to a time immediately after the Samian war, preferably in 438, in view of its content and the alleged connexion between its success and Sophocles' election to a generalship, we can hardly avoid going on to reopen on that basis the old question whether or not contemporary political issues in any way affected its composition and production, or public reaction to it. Pericles had won political supremacy in 443 by the ostracism of Thucydides son of Melesias and after the crisis precipitated by the Samian revolt doubtless managed to retain it, but there are signs of recent opposition and some degree of political unrest. The revolt itself—which after all very nearly destroyed the empire (Thuc.

<sup>25</sup> The second *Hypothesis* to Euripides' *Alcestis* gives the year (archonship of Glaucus) and states that the winner was Sophocles, with Euripides' entry (including *Alcestis*) second. H. J. Blumenthal, *CR* N.S. 24 (1974) 174f, maintains that the argument of Eur. *Alc.* 282–97 is borrowed from Soph. *Ant.* 905–12, but the simpler and more attractive explanation of the partial correspondences is that both derive from a common source, whether Herodotus (3.119 on Intaphernes' wife), *his* informant, or folk-lore.

8.76.4)—would justify the exiles' scruples and cast doubt on the wisdom of Pericles' attitude towards the allies,<sup>26</sup> and in the aftermath of its repression in 439/8 Athenian imperial policy appears to have been not altogether settled. On the one hand, the treaty with Samos, for all its severity, might seem to offer to the allies at large some prospect of liberalisation.<sup>27</sup> Against that, the ἐπιφορά of 439, increases of tribute in the assessment of 438, and conceivably already developing ambitions to promote Athens' ambitions in the Thraceward and Pontic regions<sup>28</sup> suggest the possibility of tension between opposing lobbies, and there is nothing implausible in the notion that the problem of Anaia had already emerged to aggravate it.<sup>29</sup> Another certain and more sinister indication of unrest appears in the restrictions (or even absolute ban) on comedy imposed during the Samian war in 440/39 but lasting until 437/6 (Σ Ar. *Ach.* 67). Pericles was a favorite target of the leading comic poets, who given their head would surely have feasted on propagandist allegations that his Milesian mistress Aspasia was responsible for that war.<sup>30</sup> The ban, however, continued beyond its end, preventing for a further two years any political comment, in this medium anyhow, at festivals where Athenians would gather *en masse*—joined at the City Dionysia by representatives of the allies. Among them some at least had little good to say of Pericles, whose funeral oration over the Athenian dead of the Samian war was quoted with implied criticism by Stesimbrotus of Thasos, and with overt hostility by Ion of Chios, an old friend of Pericles' former rival Cimon and perhaps also of Sophocles, while Cimon's aging half-sister Elpinice, Plutarch tells us, publicly upbraided Pericles on the very occasion of public delivery for glorying in the reduction of "an allied and kindred city."<sup>31</sup> She will hardly have been the only Athenian to think or say as much. The treatment of Samos itself, the latest in a lengthening series of repressions after rebellion, had on any reckoning been uncompromising, and there can have been no certainty of a favourable response from the allies to the appeal implicit in the settlement treaty that they should remain loyal and united. Moreover,

<sup>26</sup> See *supra* n.8.

<sup>27</sup> Meiggs 193f on *IG I<sup>3</sup> 48* (*supra* n.14); Diod. 12.28.4.

<sup>28</sup> Meiggs 194–99.

<sup>29</sup> If the Anaians had no part in the peace treaty, presumably they were still at war with Athens.

<sup>30</sup> For the allegations, Plut. *Per.* 24.1, 25.1 (comedians' attacks on Aspasia). For attacks on Pericles himself, *e.g.* 3f, 13.8–10, 16.2.

<sup>31</sup> Quotation (surely unfriendly) by Stesimbrotus *FGrHist* 107F9 (*cf.* 8, 10, 11); with outright hostility by Ion F16 (*cf.* F15). On Elpinice, *Per.* 28.6. The funeral speech remained famous in later generations—Arist. *Rh.* 1365a32 (*cf.* 1411a3), 1407a1.

even after the reassessment of tribute in 438, in prospect of that too the Aegean may still have been somewhat volatile.

These circumstances alone encourage us to see significance in *Antigone*, with its tragedy founded on tension between ruthless and untempered political logic and the dictates of moral and religious principle, and with its clear advocacy of moderation. On this view it is easy to see how Sophocles' evident understanding of these issues, which were clearly of crucial importance for public policy at the time, should have won him great acclaim, even electoral success, when displayed at the Dionysia before the Athenian citizenry and allied delegates alike, most of whom would at that date still embrace orthodox religion, by the most potent of all available media.

There is another point of very great interest. As Plutarch records, in his account of the Samian war the local historian Duris alleged that at the fall of the town in spring 439 Pericles committed what this local Hellenistic writer evidently presented as a revolting atrocity—that he had Samian trierarchs and marines taken to Miletus and strapped to boards for ten days, and then clubbed to death, leaving their bodies unburied.<sup>32</sup> If this is true, and if *Antigone* belongs to 438 (or even 437) it is very difficult to believe that there is no connexion at all between this event and Sophocles' starting point in the play. There Antigone's first mention of Creon terms him *στρατηγός* (8), which has caused some puzzlement and debate among commentators.<sup>33</sup> A few lines later (21–32), still in the *πρόλογος*, where Sophocles can be expected to be doing most to attune his audience to his theme, comes her bitter complaint that he has buried Eteocles with all due and customary honours, while Polynices' corpse has been left to the birds—"by decree of the good Creon," says she in full irony. There is an obvious temptation to see in these items scarcely veiled allusion to Pericles and his conduct, not least the contrast between his treatment of the Samian prisoners and his grandiloquent rhetoric over the Athenian dead of the Samian campaign—an invitation to the watching Athenian *demos* to pay attention and put the correct political interpretation on the poet's exploration of the deeper underlying issues, moral and political, in the theatrical reenactment of the myth—which of course in outline at least they all knew already.<sup>34</sup> If any further hint

<sup>32</sup> *FGrHist* 76F67 *ap. Plut. Per.* 28.2.

<sup>33</sup> *E.g.* Ehrenberg (*supra* n.4) 105–12, favouring a political interpretation; J. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles III Antigone* (Leiden 1978) *ad loc.*, against.

<sup>34</sup> For Pericles' speech and hostile reaction to it and to him, see *supra* n.30. It is of course futile (and naïve) to look for exact and all-pervasive parallelism between events and situations in the Samian war and those of the play: all that we need

were needed, there is the victory song of the *parodos* to consider, the political lessons of Creon's scene with Haemon—and more could be added.

The validity of this notion clearly depends on whether Duris' allegations were true: if not, it collapses. Plutarch's stated grounds for disbelief, the silence of Thucydides, Ephorus, and Aristotle, are not cogent: none had a reason for inclusion.<sup>35</sup> His mode of citation is more interesting. He uses the verb ἐπιτραγωδεῖ (“he introduces accretions from tragedy”) here and nowhere else except in sceptically recounting Ctesias' account of the miraculous burial of Clearchus' corpse, left exposed by his Persian foes. The story is patently imported from Sophocles' *Antigone*,<sup>36</sup> and the obvious inference is that Plutarch believes Duris to have done something very similar in his allegations against Pericles. But then, is he right? True, Duris was at least well read and wrote a monograph on Euripides and Sophocles;<sup>37</sup> he may well have known enough about *Antigone* and its author's career and connexions with Samos for patriotic inventions along these lines to suggest themselves to him. But then again, is there any support other than Plutarch's suspicions for such a nebulous hypothesis? Notoriously, Duris has a bad reputation for lurid sensationalism—deservedly, to judge from extant fragments. Nevertheless, it is to be borne in mind that their very preservation may be due to the interests of the authors who cite them rather than to the overall character of Duris' lengthy works;<sup>38</sup> that they are quoted out of context, and some stories at least he may have included only to discount them himself; and that although many are undoubtedly false, there is no logical reason why others should not be true.

It will not do simply to plead that fifth-century Athens, and more particularly Pericles, would have been incapable of such conduct. Wars commonly do produce horrors, particularly wars in which much is at stake. Perhaps indeed we can prove nothing from testimony that in the Samian conflict both sides branded (or tattooed) each other's

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suppose is a tangential relationship sufficient to encourage the audience to refer to contemporary issues the poet's sensitive exploration of moral and political principles in his dramatic handling of the familiar myth. What he may have thought of Athenian law at this time, earnestly discussed by many scholars, is for present purposes irrelevant.

<sup>35</sup> Meiggs 192 counters Plutarch's scepticism. Plutarch attests that Ephorus omitted the atrocity, but Diod. 12.28.3 (*supra* n.19; nn.40f *infra*), presumably from Ephorus, does vouch for punishment—surely by execution—of “the guilty.”

<sup>36</sup> Plut. *Artax.* 18 (pointed out to me by Professor Borthwick); Soph. *Ant.* 417ff.

<sup>37</sup> F29; cf. F28, attesting another (?) monograph on tragedy.

<sup>38</sup> Length possibly attested by Duris τ6, τ10, but in any case substantial.

prisoners, for it may all derive from Duris, and the obscure fragment of Aristophanes' *Babylonians* which Photius cites it to elucidate may have some other explanation, as he himself suggests—though Plutarch believes both in the marking and in its relevance to the comic quotation.<sup>39</sup> What is beyond reasonable doubt is that at the close of the war Samian leaders were executed, evidently stated by Ephorus (but omitted by Plutarch, despite having read him).<sup>40</sup> But was it done in the manner described by Duris? Some of his details—location in Miletus, specification of trierarchs and marines—might be thought too circumstantial to be simple invention, but anyhow it is undeniable that the mode of execution in Duris corresponds very closely with our other evidence for ἀποτυμπανισμός, the punishment inflicted by Athens on her own citizens found guilty of treason and other serious crimes, and which aggrieved parties (such as the Milesians in this case might easily have claimed to be) were allowed not indeed to exact, but to witness.<sup>41</sup> That Samians deemed guilty of outrages against Athens and, it may be, against Miletus should have been executed like common criminals, justifiably or not, is perfectly credible. Nor need we doubt that Pericles cast out the bodies without burial rites, for that too is almost certainly explicable in terms of Athenian law and penal practices at the time. For one thing, an alternative method of execution at one time was precipitation into a natural chasm or excavated pit (βάραθρον, ὄρυγμα)—which might well amount to an open grave—and there is some reason to think that this may have become the standard means of disposal for bodies of criminals executed in other ways.<sup>42</sup> Probably more important, however, is the virtual certainty that at this date, within the territory of Attica at least, burial of persons convicted of treason was forbidden, and in 410 the decree of Andron denied burial to Archeptolemus and Antiphon

<sup>39</sup> F66 ap. Photius s.v. Σαμίων ὁ δῆμος=Ar. *Bab.* fr.71 K./A.; cf. Plut. *Per.* 26.4; Ael. *VH* 2.9. The comedy belongs to 426, and was apparently heavily critical of Athens' attitude under Cleon towards her allies. See further D. Welsh, *GRBS* 24 (1983) 137–50. On tattooing (rather than branding) see now C. P. Jones, *JRS* 77 (1987) 139ff, esp. 148.

<sup>40</sup> Diod. 12.28.3 (*supra* n.19, n.41 *infra*).

<sup>41</sup> D. M. Macdowell, *Athenian Homicide Law in the Age of the Orators* (Manchester 1963) 111–13; *The Law in Classical Athens* (Ithaca 1978) 254f; R. J. Bonner and G. Smith, *The Administration of Justice from Homer to Aristotle II* (Chicago 1930) 279ff. To date the fullest and most lucid account, even if rather inconclusive, is that of L. Gernet, *REG* 37 (1924) 261–93, adding more material, notably Ar. *Eq.* 1049. I hope to attempt further discussion myself elsewhere.

<sup>42</sup> Macdowell, Bonner/Smith, and Gernet (*supra* n.41), citing Hdt. 7.133.1; Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.20; Pl. *Grg.* 516D; Lycurg. *Leocr.* 121; Din. 1.62; Σ Ar. *Plut.* 431; Phot., *Suda* s.v. μητραγύρτης; Poll. 8.71; Harp. s.v. βάραθρον.

within the confines of the whole Athenian Empire. That in 439 Pericles should have applied Attic law not only in execution of Samians but also (possibly by innovatory extension) in the treatment of the corpses, in effect denying them burial altogether, does not strain belief.<sup>43</sup>

There is then a case for accepting Duris' fundamental veracity here and no compelling reason to discard his information. If it is true, we can be sure that many Athenians will have been quite satisfied that Pericles' treatment of Samos and captured Samian rebel leaders was entirely legal and proper, or anyhow politically necessary. Plainly others were not, and there is no difficulty in believing that significant numbers, perhaps especially among the *χρηστοί* who might be sympathetic to the victims, were profoundly disturbed by the *Schrecklichkeit* at Miletus, finding it an unwarrantably severe, impolitic, provocative, and arguably unlawful (and very likely unprecedented) misapplication of Athenian norms, if not also gratuitously cruel and downright impious.<sup>44</sup> Sophocles beyond question had the intellectual sophistication to understand both viewpoints perfectly well, but his instincts surely favoured the second.<sup>45</sup> In any case, to whatever degree these suggestions may or may not reflect the true reactions of those con-

<sup>43</sup> Full discussion here would be too lengthy. See H. Hager, *JP* 8 (1917) 1–13; A. C. Pearson, *CQ* 16 (1922) 124–37; C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford 1944) 48f, 64f, 70; H. J. Mette, *Hermes* 84 (1956) 129ff; D. A. Hester, *Mnemosyne* SER. IV 24 (1971) 19f. On the decree of Andron, [Plut.] *X orat.* 833F. Other sources on this topic include Thuc. 1.126.12, 138.6; Plut. *Them.* 22, 32; *Sol.* 12 (cf. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 1); *Phoc.* 33; Xen. *Hell.* 1.7.22; Plat. *Resp.* 439E; *Leg.* 873B, 874B, 900B, 909C, 960B; Diod. 16.25.2; Stob. *Flor.* 2.68; Lycurg. *Leocr.* 113; Hyperides *Lyc.* 16, *Eux.* 31; Aeschin. 3.235, 252; Lys. 12.18, 21; Dem. 44.37; Nic. Dam. *FGrHist* 90F60; Ael. *VH* 4.7; Paus. 4.27.7, 6.11.6; Poll. 8.120. Defenders of Pericles may wish to point out that even in Duris he issues no absolute ban on burial but only orders *προβαλεῖν ἀκήδεντα τὰ σώματα*—possibly into a *βάραθρον* or *ὄρυγμα* and possibly for relatives to collect. Difficulty and delay in finding kinsmen or persuading them to emerge—especially if intent on reviving resistance at Anaia—is likely enough, and the effect would have been much the same as an absolute ban on burial.

<sup>44</sup> On Athenian gentry and the relations with leading allies [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.14f is perhaps the *locus classicus*. For the concern of Athenian intellectuals over such matters, compare e.g. Euripides *Troades*, Thucydides' patent distaste for Athenian conduct over Mytilene in 428, Scione in 421, Melos in 416, for all parties on Corcyra in 427—and much else. The most recent and useful discussion of the conflicting values involved in the issue is by V. J. Rosivach, *RhM* 126 (1983) 193ff; see also C. M. Bowra (*supra* n.43) 92ff. That such severe punishment of allies after rebellion would have been in 438 a striking novelty is strongly suggested by the review of earlier cases by P. Karavites, *RhM* 128 (1985) 40–56. I cannot however accept his inference that Duris' testimony must therefore be false.

<sup>45</sup> Besides, if the suggestion is right that Sophocles was a fellow general of Pericles in 440/39 (*supra* 62), it is hard to imagine that he would not wish to dissociate himself from this policy.

cerned at the time, given only our new date and Duris' essential reliability on this matter, it remains extremely likely that at the very least—to repeat the point—events in Miletus a few months earlier inspired Sophocles' choice of subject; together with other broader issues of which those events and resulting dispute over them were symptomatic, they may have influenced deeply his treatment of the myth in exploring the tragic clash of moral and political imperatives. Naturally that is not to say that the play must have been intended simply and solely (or even principally) as a vehicle of political protest about Samos or Athens' treatment of her allies, or as a precept or warning about Pericles, his policies, and the problems of the day; still less is it to impugn Sophocles' artistic integrity or greatness as a dramatic poet of the universal themes so powerfully developed in its unfolding. It is nevertheless hard to deny that for an Athenian audience in 438 this tragedy would have had an unmistakable political dimension and contemporary significance.

That much remains true—albeit somewhat diminished in force—even if the determined sceptic is allowed to discount the testimony of Duris, from which the arguments for dating the play to 438 and for suggesting an element of contemporary political relevance in it can stand quite independent. The latter case is assisted by a further consideration: evidence for Sophocles' differences with Pericles during the Samian campaign and his probable friendships and acquaintances among the Alcmaeonid populist's critics.<sup>46</sup> On this view the vulgate tradition reported in the *Hypothesis* by Aristophanes of Byzantium may easily be right in regarding *Antigone*, with its patent moral and political sensibilities, as a major reason for the poet's reinstatement in the generalship for 438/7 to confront the difficulties of that year. The appointment was neither capricious nor foolish. Sophocles' main talents were clearly not those of field-commander but rather those of the diplomat. His connexions among Aegean communities, very likely cultivated during service as *hellenotamias* in 443/2, if not also as general in the Samian war, not to mention their possibly enhanced trust of him accruing from production of *Antigone*, would be eminently useful assets, whether for assisting with the imminent reassessment of tribute (438), recruiting allied forces by persuasion rather than coercion against the Anaians, or even negotiating a satisfactory settlement with them without further hostilities: a prospect which, it might have been hoped, they too might find attractive.

<sup>46</sup> Possible signs of tension between Sophocles and Pericles in Ion F6; Plut. *Per.* 8.8; cf. Cic. *Off.* 1.144; Val. Max. 4.3. *ext.* 1. See also *supra* nn.8, 30.

If that was the plan, apparently at least as far as Anaia was concerned, it failed and with it a short-lived revival of Sophocles' political fortunes. Periclean imperialism supervened, more positive and little opposed, sweeping Athens inexorably toward conflict with Sparta and the Peloponnesians.<sup>47</sup> There is no sign of Sophocles in office or in politics for some considerable time.<sup>48</sup> Pericles won the immediate political argument. On the deeper and more abiding issues the last word was to remain with the poet.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *E.g.* Meiggs 191–204, *etc.*; D. Kagan, *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca 1969); G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca 1972).

<sup>48</sup> Plut. *Nic.* 15.2, if not altogether apocryphal, has Sophocles a colleague of Nicias in the generalship at a time when Sophocles was very old and Nicias firmly established as a leading military figure and politician. There is no need (*pace* Woodbury, *supra* n.3) to seek to identify this generalship with any other that Sophocles may have held earlier. H. D. Westlake, *Hermes* 84 (1956) 114, plausibly suggests 423/2 as a likely date, when Sophocles was indeed in his seventies, but not too old for the important diplomacy of that year.

<sup>49</sup> This paper emerged from an advisory rôle in the recent production of the *Theban Plays* by BBC2 Television (September 1986), with Mr Don Taylor directing his own version of the plays in dramatic verse. My colleagues Professor E. K. Borthwick and Dr N. K. Rutter made useful suggestions, as did the readers for this journal. Brief but vital conversation with Professor P. A. Brunt led me to restructure the argument and, I hope, improve it. I alone am responsible for any remaining blunders.