

SOPHOCLES AMONG THE GENERALS

LEONARD WOODBURY

ACCORDING TO THE FIRST ARGUMENT of the play,¹ which is attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium, the Athenians elected Sophocles general as a recognition of his success in the production of the *Antigone*.² It is certain that he was general with Pericles in 441/0, when the Samian revolt occurred (Thuc. 1.115.1), for his name occurs in a list of the generals of that year given by Androtion.³ Ion of Chios, whose *Visits* was a contemporary source for these events, met him on his native island, to which Sophocles had sailed during his generalship on his way to Lesbos.⁴ Thucydides reports (1.116.2) that in the course of the Athenian naval operations against Samos a small squadron was despatched from the main fleet to collect reinforcements from these two islands; it is probable that Sophocles was with those ships.⁵ That is all that can be said about his naval achievements. They were no doubt satisfactory in the performance of routine duties but we have no reason to believe that they went further than that.⁶ The later tradition emphasises the part of Sophocles in the naval campaign, making him by implication Pericles' chief colleague,⁷ but that appears to be a simplification and exaggeration. The tenor of the anecdotes related by the contemporary Ion and others is certainly against the tendency, shown in the late sources, to make much of Sophocles' military role.

Ion reports that Sophocles was not active in politics, but merely took such a part as any Athenian gentleman might take.⁸ According to the same source, Sophocles quoted with approval a saying of Pericles about himself, that he knew how to compose but not how to be a general.⁹ The

¹In writing this paper I have had the advantage of suggestions made by a number of colleagues in Toronto and by Mr W. G. Forrest of Wadham College, Oxford, Professor B. D. Meritt of Princeton, and Professor W. K. Pritchett of Berkeley. The responsibility for the use that I have made of their advice is, of course, my own.

²φασὶ δὲ τὸν Σοφοκλέα ἡξιῶσθαι τῆς ἐν Σάμῳ στρατηγίας εὐδοκμήσαντα ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῆς Ἀντιγόνης.

³Schol. Aristid. p. 485 Dindorf: *FGrHist* 324 F 38. The generals mentioned by Thucydides (1.117.2) whose names do not occur in the list must belong to the following year, 440/439, into which the campaign extended: cf. A. W. Gomme's note in his *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* 1 (Oxford 1945) 352.

⁴Athen. 13.604d: fr. 8 von Blumenthal: *FGrHist* 392 F 6.

⁵Cf. also Diod. Sic. 12.27–28 and Plut. *Pericl.* 25–28.

⁶Cf. V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford 1954) 117–120.

⁷Strabo 14.1.18: 638; Aristod. 15.4: *FGrHist* 104 F 15; Justin 3.6.12; *Suda* s.v. Melissus.

⁸τὰ μέντοι πολιτικά οὔτε σοφὸς οὔτε ῥεκτήριος ἦν, ἀλλ' ὥς ἂν τις εἰς τῶν χρηστῶν Ἀθηναίων.

⁹Περικλῆς ποιεῖν μὲν <με> ἔφη, στρατηγεῖν δ' οὐκ ἐπίστασθαι.

theme of the good-humoured, pleasure-loving, complaisant poet who makes urbane fun of his own military capacities and the friendly raillery of Pericles recurs in other anecdotes.¹⁰ No doubt Ion's stories, like the anecdotes, are told as by a writer of memoirs, in which a certain licence is granted to malicious or playful denigration on the one hand and to high-minded self-depreciation on the other, rather than by an unprejudiced writer of history or biography. His evidence may therefore be discounted by any one who wishes to find in Sophocles a powerful, practising politician.¹¹ But Ion is retailing the gossip of the time and appears to catch very well, not only the personal tone of Sophocles' relations with Pericles, but also the general appreciation of the spectacle presented by a prize-winning poet taking his station on an admiral's deck. All in all, the evidence supports the view that there was a close association with Pericles in the generalship of 441/0 and in the naval operations against Samos, whereas it was openly recognised that Sophocles had no especial political or military claims beyond those of any other member of his class, unless his public spirit and advantageous connections distinguished him from others. This conclusion is then consistent with the assumption, not improbable in itself, that his election owed something to his friendship with Pericles.

If we grant this, we are not thereby prevented from believing what the Argument tells us, that his election was a distinction conferred on the author of the *Antigone*. The Argument belongs to a class of scholarly writings ('*Τροθῆσεις*') by Aristophanes of Byzantium, which appear to have drawn on the authoritative Catalogues (*Πίνακες*) of Callimachus and to have contained chronological information about the first performances of plays.¹² It is a matter of conjecture where Aristophanes or Callimachus found the information concerning Sophocles' success with the *Antigone* and his election as general, but the most likely source must be Ion himself, who is evidently responsible, directly or indirectly, for the

¹⁰Plut. *Pericl.* 8.8 and *Nic.* 15.2; Plato, *Rep.* 1.329b-c; Arist. *Rhet.* 1.14.3: 1374b35-1375a2; 3.15.3: 1416a13-17; 3.18.6: 1419a26-31; Cic. *De off.* 1.40, 144.

¹¹Cf., e.g., E. Meyer, *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte* 2 (Halle 1889) 87. H. T. Wade-Gery, in *JHS* 52 (1932) 219, note 58 = *Essays in Greek History* (Oxford 1958) 258, note 1, makes Sophocles "one of Pericles' right-hand men." On the other side, Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* 136-140 argues that Sophocles was "not a party-man" and did not owe his election as general to the political support of Pericles, although he must have at least acquiesced, as Hellenotamias, in his imperial policy. H. D. Westlake, in *Hermes* 84 (1956) 115, regards him as a conservative rather than as a supporter of Pericles.

¹²Cf. R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 192-196; G. Zuntz, *The Political Plays of Euripides* (Manchester 1955) 129-152, especially 139, note 6. A. E. Raubitschek in *Phoenix* 14 (1960) 85-86 thinks of a biographical tradition going back to Satyrus and possibly to Androtion. This hypothesis is consistent with the suggested derivation from Ion and the anecdotes.

anecdotes that cluster round Sophocles' association with Pericles and demonstrably took pleasure in the irony of the events that made the poet a general.

At this point it is desirable to digress on Sophocles' later military and political career in order to discover whether the judgment that we accepted from Ion concerning his standing in 441 is coherent with what we can learn of his public activities throughout his life. This matter is not directly relevant to the question with which we have been concerned, which is the poet's qualification for election in 441. It may however have some value indirectly as corroboration or the opposite, if the evidence, which is neither strong nor clear, is critically scrutinised.

An anecdote is related by Plutarch (*Nic.* 15.2) which makes Sophocles Nicias' colleague in a generalship. Once, at some unspecified time, when there was a council of generals at their headquarters, Sophocles was called upon by Nicias to give his opinion first, as the senior member (*πρεσβύτατος*). Sophocles replied that, though he was senior in age (*παλαιότατος*) among the generals, Nicias was senior in dignity (*πρεσβύτατος*). M. H. Jameson and H. D. Westlake¹³ accept the story and show that, as Sophocles and Nicias were of the same tribe (Aegeis), the latter must have enjoyed the precedence implied by an election ἐξ ἀπάντων, whereas Sophocles was only the representative of their tribe on the Board.¹⁴ This implication is not the point which Plutarch wishes to illustrate by recounting the anecdote: that Nicias carried especial weight because of his wealth and reputation; but it is not incompatible with that point.

Another consideration however reinforces this observation. It is often inferred that Nicias was in the chair and so had a right to call on members to speak. It is not stated explicitly by what right he took the chair, whether because of the mode of his election or by an order of rotation.

¹³M. H. Jameson, "Seniority in the *Stratēgia*," *TAPA* 86 (1955) 63-87; H. D. Westlake "Sophocles and Nicias as Colleagues," *Hermes* 84 (1956) 110-116.

¹⁴K. J. Dover, "Δέκατος αὐτός," *JHS* 80 (1960) 61-77 has shown that the formulas commonly thought to signify that one general was Chairman or Commander-in-Chief do not support that interpretation. He appears (62-63) to accept in Plutarch's story a reference to the precedence implied in an election ἐξ ἀπάντων, but denies the implication, found by Jameson, that Nicias was acting, by right of the mode of his election, as Chairman or Commander-in-Chief. This view has also been rejected by R. Sealey, "Athens and the Archidamian War," *PACA* 1 (1958) 60-87, especially 65-70. D. M. Lewis, "Double Representation in the *Stratēgia*," *JHS* 81 (1961) 118-123, while accepting Dover's criticism on other points, still finds "some force" in the opinion that the institution of elections ἐξ ἀπάντων was intended to provide a Chairman. References to some of the earlier discussions are collected by C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution* (corrected edition, Oxford 1958) 347-356; E. S. Staveland, in *Ancient Society and Institutions* (Oxford 1966) 285, note 1. Add now Westlake's comments in *Individuals in Thucydides* (Cambridge 1968) 24, note 3.

But Sophocles' reply, which is deftly expressed, would have been inappropriate, if its effect had been to propose, on his own initiative, that the standing rules of order, which granted precedence according to age, be upset for once to permit the permanent Chairman to open the discussion. It is easier to believe that Nicias normally enjoyed a certain precedence on the Board which was inhibited on the day in question, because he happened to be taking his turn in the chair. In the circumstances he chose to adopt the procedure, *seniores priores*, until Sophocles gracefully made way for him so that he could exercise his customary privilege.

It is a consequence of these two points that Nicias did not owe his precedence to his chairmanship nor his chairmanship to the mode of his election. The anecdote does not make clear whether his precedence was conferred by the weight of his personal authority, as Plutarch believed, or by his election ἐξ ἀπάντων, as Jameson and Westlake prefer. On general grounds it seems likely that only candidates who possessed unusual political, social, and moral stature, in addition to purely military ability, would normally be elected ἐξ ἀπάντων and that their prestige would be increased by such an election. In that case the problem is reduced to a formal question of law, whether the mode of election created or merely recognised Nicias' precedence and whether his precedence existed *de jure* or only *de facto*. What is established is the fact of his precedence and the general recognition of his position that it implies.¹⁵

This conclusion has a bearing on the perplexing problem of the date of this generalship. If Nicias could be called πρεσβύτατος of the generals and enjoyed the precedence and authority that is thereby implied, it is impossible to date the story very early in his career as a military commander, which had certainly begun in 427 (Thuc. 3.51.1). How much earlier he had served we cannot tell; we have only Plutarch's vague and unsupported statement (*Nic.* 2.2) that Nicias was often Pericles' colleague in the office. He is not known to have been elected ἐξ ἀπάντων until 415/4 or 414/3.¹⁶ Westlake suggests 423/2 for the occasion, when the armistice was about to be signed and there would be more need than usual for some generals with diplomatic skills, such as Sophocles may have possessed.¹⁷ Ehrenberg thinks that the years between 421 and 415 are most probable, if the story can be accepted at all.¹⁸ On these views Sophocles was in the eighth or ninth decade of his life and so might truly be παλαιότατος among the generals. This consequence does nothing to make the anecdote

¹⁵Cf. Hignett, *Hist. of the Ath. Const.* 247–251, 352–354.

¹⁶Cf. Hignett 349.

¹⁷According to the *Vita* 1, Sophocles took part in embassies.

¹⁸*Sophocles and Pericles* 117, note 1.

credible, even if Phocion was once general at so advanced an age, as Westlake points out.¹⁹ It follows also that the story is probably not from Ion, who died in 422/1.²⁰ But the theme of the disadvantaged though gracious poet-general, who wittily depreciates himself, is evidently similar to Ion's story about Pericles; the suspicion must then arise that it is a later imitation of an established form of Sophoclean anecdote.

It is possible to find a somewhat earlier date, which would permit us to believe in the derivation of the story from Ion, by assuming that the Sophocles in question was originally the son of Sostratides.²¹ He was general from 426 to 424 and it has now been made probable that Nicias was his colleague in 426/5, as well as in 425/4.²² Neither year seems very probable, for Nicias was not elected ἐξ ἀπάντων for 426/5 and, though Sophocles was in Sicily for the greater part of 425/4, if Nicias ever met him in council at Athens, he "is unlikely to have shown much regard for the opinions of a colleague who had failed in an important mission and was about to be put on trial for this failure."²³ It seems clear also that the form and tone of the anecdote conform to the type of those which attached to the poet, whose age in these years is also appropriate, whereas the son of Sostratides is unknown to us before this and is on general grounds unlikely to have been advanced in age in these years. It is therefore improbable that the story arose from the association of Nicias with the son of Sostratides at that time. It remains possible that the story was originally independent of the historical setting in which we find it; if so, it was first told of the poet, but not of Nicias, who was brought in for the sake of verisimilitude on the basis of the roster of generals in 426/5 and 425/4.

The earliest date is provided by an unexpected statement in the *Vita Sophoclis* (9). It mentions a generalship at the age of sixty-nine "in the war against the Anaeans, seven years before the Peloponnesian War" (πρὸ τῶν Πελοποννησιακῶν ἔτεσιν ζ' ἐν τῷ πρὸς Ἀναίους πολέμῳ).²⁴ The Anaeans (or Anaeitans) included the remnant of the Samians who had removed to the mainland opposite in 439 and "continued in irreconcilable hostility to Athens."²⁵ Some minor and desultory encounters with them

¹⁹*Hermes* 84 (1956) 114, note 6. For Phocion as general at about 80, cf. Plut. *Phoc.* 24.5; *An seni resp. ger. sit* 791e-f and 819a; Dio Chrys. 73.7.

²⁰Cf. F. Jacoby in *CQ* 41 (1947) 1.

²¹Cf. W. Schmid, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* 1.2 (Munich 1934) 319, note 1.

²²For 426/5, cf. Thuc. 3.91; Athen. 5.218b; and Lewis in *JHS* 81 (1961) 119-121; for 425/4, Thuc. 4.27-28 and 42.1.

²³Westlake in *Hermes* 84 (1956) 114.

²⁴The notice is often rejected, as by T. B. L. Webster, *An Introduction to Sophocles* (Oxford 1936) 12; Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* 117, note 1; and Westlake, 110, note 1.

²⁵Gomme, *Hist. Comm.* on Thuc. 3.19.2.

in 428 and 427 are mentioned by Thucydides.²⁶ More than a generation ago G. Perrotta combined this notice with Plutarch's story about Nicias and made Sophocles and Nicias colleagues in a campaign in 428/7.²⁷ Sophocles might be taken to be sixty-nine in that year, if the calculation was exclusive and began with a date of birth in 497/6, as given by the Parian Marble. This assumes generalships for Nicias and Sophocles in 428/7 that are respectively uncertain and unknown, though not impossible.²⁸

The remaining difficulty is the inconsistent double dating in our text. "Seven years before the Peloponnesian War" gives 438, about a decade earlier than Sophocles' sixty-ninth birthday. The best proposal made to deal with the text is Perrotta's; he wishes to read: *πρὸ τῶν Πελοποννησιακῶν (σπονδῶν)*. The alteration, if not compelling, is tolerable²⁹ and gives a single date, 428/7, seven years before the truce with the Peloponnesians of 421.

If nevertheless it is desired to find an interpretation of the text as it stands, it must be agreed that some definite date before the war, such as 438, is intended. The reference might be to an otherwise unknown engagement with the Samian refugees soon after they withdrew to Anaea after Samos itself was reduced in 439, and the inconsistent double dating would then arise from a confusion of the two incidents involving Anaea. But the date is much too early for Nicias, who is not known to have been prominent at this time, much less a general elected *ἐξ πάντων*, while it is just too late for Sophocles' only certain generalship in 441/0. Then, "the war against the Anaeans" is an exaggerated description of what appears to have been no more than an incidental skirmish or ambush, though the term "war" is appropriate enough for the Samian campaign of 441–439. Jebb (xlii, note 3) and others call attention to the verbal similarity between *ΙΠΟΣ ΑΝΑΙΟΤΣ* and *ΙΠΟΣ ΣΑΜΙΟΤΣ*, which might lead to textual corruption or, more probably, to misunderstanding. The most likely outcome of this line of reasoning is that there has been a conflation of two events, Sophocles' generalship of 441/0 in the war against the Samians and some operations against the Samian *émigrés* at Anaea, presumably under Nicias' command, during the Archidamian

²⁶Thuc. 3.19.2 and 32.2; 4.75.1.

²⁷*Sofocle* (Messina and Milan 1935) 42 and note 1. Cf. also G. Busolt, *Griechische Geschichte* 3.1 (Gotha 1897) 576, note 3.

²⁸Nicias conducted operations in 427 (Thuc. 3.51.1), but we are not told in which Athenian year they fell.

²⁹Especially by comparison with other conjectures, which alter both numerals (*νϵ'* for *ξθ'*, *θ'* for *ζ'*). Cf. Schmid, *Gesch. d. griech. Lit.* 1.2.317, note 7. But Perrotta gives no instances of *αἱ Πελοποννησιακαὶ σπονδαί*, whereas the adjective is common enough with reference to the war; nor does he make probable the use of such an epoch, either in general or in this case.

War, probably in 428 or 427. The conflation is made easier by the Samian origin of Anaea and the verbal similarity in the two names; it would be easier still if the Athenians were known to have concluded the campaign against Samos by raids made on the fugitives across the strait. Sophocles was certainly prominent in the earlier campaign and Nicias might have been general in the later; they could then have been made colleagues by the confusion of the two events and have provided an historical context either for a floating anecdote or for an authentic and memorable example of Sophocles' tact and wit.

It is possible to invoke once more the son of Sostratides, who was general with Nicias in 426/5, when the poet was sixty-nine, if his age is calculated by exclusive reckoning from a date of birth in 495/4, as given by the *Vita*. But his service, so far as we know, was in Sicily, not in the Aegean, his known generalship is just too late for action against the Anaeans, and Nicias for his part, was not elected ἐξ ἀπάντων for 426/5. The most that can be claimed is that his presence on the Board with Nicias in 426/5 and 425/4 may have contributed to the conflation of two events that were in fact separated by more than a decade.

The obvious conclusion is that the case for Sophocles' second generalship is not strong.³⁰ If Plutarch's story is taken to be authentic, chronological difficulties become severe. At any date when Nicias may reasonably be believed to have possessed the prestige implied by the anecdote or by an election ἐξ ἀπάντων, Sophocles' age is too advanced to make him a likely colleague as general and Ion becomes an improbable source, if he is not precluded altogether. If this story is combined with the notice in the *Vita* concerning "the war against the Anaeans," there are two possibilities. Either the text must be altered to yield clear testimony for a single date, and an unknown campaign and a very early pre-eminence assumed for Nicias, as well as the generalship for Sophocles. Or else we must find the tale to be a conflation of two different occasions, about a decade apart, and deny the value of the anecdote for dating. It may be bolder and more enterprising to choose the former alternative; it can hardly be denied that critical prudence favours the latter. But even if the story is authentic, it conforms to the anecdotal tradition which lays more emphasis on Sophocles' poetic, amorous, and social activities than on his military capacities, and gives little help in assessing his specific qualifications as a general in 441/0.

In another passage of the *Vita* (1) the poet is said to have been a colleague of "Pericles and Thucydides (presumably, the son of Melesias),

³⁰The reference to Sophocles in Aristoph. *Pax* 695 ff. of 421 is of doubtful relevance to a generalship and too obscure to be helpful. Cf. however Webster, *Introduction* 12-13 and Jameson in *TAPA* 86 (1955) 70-71 and note 18.

the leading men of the city." The tone of the passage suggests that it is as inflationary about Sophocles' military achievements as are other late sources. Ehrenberg's comment is as pertinent as it is pungent: "The writer probably referred to the Samian war, Sophocles' only well-known *strategia*, and having read in Thucydides I 117,2 that a Thucydides was a general in the Samian war (though in 440/39 and not in 441/0), he fused all his knowledge together in one brief but utterly mistaken sentence."³¹

Finally, in 413 a certain Sophocles was elected a member of the Commission set up to deal with the desperate situation of that year.³² It should be borne in mind that this person may have been another bearer of the name, for example, the Sophocles who was to become a member of the Thirty in 404 (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.2). But if he was the aged poet, his election only bears witness to what we should in any case believe, that he was a considerable and public-spirited man who was held in continuing regard by the Athenians, even in his great old age and their own dire extremity. It is irrelevant to the question of his military capacities in 441/0 and contributes little to our estimate of his purely political stature and actions.³³

The upshot of this discussion is that there is only one generalship, that of 441/0, concerning which the ancient evidence gives us anything like knowledge. Texts that testify to later service in the office are probably best taken as deriving from exaggerated variations on the anecdotal tradition. The desire to magnify Sophocles' achievements as a general is evident in the later sources generally and this tendency is likely to be responsible also for anecdotes that associate the poet with "the leading men of the city," as the *Vita* calls them. The phrase provokes thoughtfulness when it is remembered that Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 28.5) judged Thucydides, Nicias, and Theramenes "the best statesmen in Athens after those of the early period." It was, it seems, upon the first and second of these that the inventive anecdotalists fastened, in order to enlarge upon the only relevant fact, which was Sophocles' association with Pericles.

³¹*Sophocles and Pericles* 117, note 1. The story about Thucydides is rejected also by Jameson 71, note 19 and Westlake in *Hermes* 84 (1956) 110, note 1; but cf. A. E. Raubitschek in *Phoenix* 14 (1960) 85-86. A notice in *Vit. Thuc.* 6-7 makes Thucydides a general, presumably in 444/3, but its truth is doubted by Wade-Gery, *EGH* (cf. note 11 above) 257 and 261.

³²Arist. *Rhet.* 3.18.6: 1419a26-31; cf. Westlake in *Hermes* 84 (1956) 111, note 3.

³³According to the story Sophocles, being asked by Peisander whether he agreed with the other *πρόβουλοι* in establishing the 400, replied that there was no better alternative. It is a small point, but one not to be overlooked, that the anecdote bears one characteristic of the authentic tradition coming from Ion, the poet's self-depreciation. If the story is told of the poet and is true, it counts nothing to his discredit that he was unable to stem the flood of events that were carrying Athens towards oligarchy; but it is equally true that it does not present the poet as a powerful force in politics.

But the story concerning Peisander, whether it is true or false, shows that the events of which Theramenes was a great part were also of interest to the developing legend.

If we are not to regard the generalship of 441/0 as the beginning of something like a military career, we shall be less inclined to reject the explanation of his election in that year which is offered by the Argument, whatever its ultimate source. Even so, it remains true that the explanation may not at first sight command assent. Several considerations may nevertheless be advanced to support it. The importance attached by the Greeks to poetry in general and the status given by the Athenian state to tragedy in particular are warnings against judging the story by the standards of our own time or the quite different position of poets in our society. It is relevant to notice that Carcinus was general in 431 (Thuc. 2.23.2) and has been identified with the poet of that name (*Suda* s.v.).³⁴ Next, Sophocles could not be excluded on the ground that he was a *poète pur* without practical experience, since he had served as Hellenotamias in 443/2.³⁵ Thirdly, the anecdotes concerning Sophocles' generalship imply that he was not elected because of his military experience or capacity and draw a sharp contrast between his military and his poetic skills. Fourthly, the qualifications that the Athenians required of their generals were by no means purely military. They habitually chose candidates from the upper classes, whose family, wealth, and tradition of leadership could be trusted and called to account. Aristotle indeed exaggerates this tendency to the point of saying that the generals in Cimon's younger days were men without military experience.³⁶ Finally, it is a fact that he *was* elected general, in spite of Ion's judgment that he lacked especial military qualifications. We do not know what the Athenians thought of him in this respect, though they presumably judged him to be, at the least, competent. But we can understand that they knew him as a man and as a public official; they did not expect war in the spring of 441, the fifth year after the Thirty Years Truce, and so might regard his election as largely honorific and his duties as no more than routine in purely military matters, though increased by other responsibilities, as for example in the conduct of foreign affairs and in certain religious observances; Pericles was his friend and the people loved

³⁴Cf. E. Diehl in *RE* 10 (1919) 1952. Aelian (*Var. Hist.* 3.8) has an anecdote concerning the election of the poet Phrynichus as general, but nothing else is known of Phrynichus' generalship: cf. Jebb's edition of the play, xlvii, note 2.

³⁵*SEG* 5 (1931) 12.36; *ATL* 1.567 and index of vol. 4 s.v. That Sophocles' name is correctly read on the stone is confirmed by B. D. Meritt in *AJP* 80 (1959) 189.

³⁶*Ath. Pol.* 26; cf. also [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.3; Eupolis fr. 117 Kock and Edmonds; Arist. *Polit.* 3.6.11: 1282a25-32; Hignett, *Hist. of the Ath. Const.* 224, 245, 249; and Jebb xlvii-xlviii.

to distinguish him by public honours, awarding him an unrivalled twenty-four victories for his tragedies and repeatedly electing him to public office.³⁷ In these circumstances, there is nothing unreasonable in believing that the great success of a tragedy was the immediate occasion, even if it was not the sole cause, of his election as general in 441.³⁸

The story however implies that the election occurred at a time when the impression made by the production of the *Antigone* was still fresh, and this gives rise to chronological problems. First of all, a victory of Euripides is recorded by the Parian Marble (*FGrHist* 239 A 60) for the year 442/1. This must have been at the City Dionysia of 441, and if the Parian inscription is correct, Sophocles cannot have been victorious in that year. But the story requires that the *Antigone* was successful. The conclusion, that the *Antigone* was not produced in 441, cannot be escaped by the assumption that Euripides' victory was won at the Lenaea, for we know of no productions of Euripidean tragedies at that festival nor of any dramatic contests there at all before about 440.³⁹

Secondly, Aristotle reports (*Ath. Pol.* 44.4) that the generals and other military officials were elected by the assembly after the sixth prytany at a time when favourable omens were obtained. If this rule is valid for the fifth century, it may be related to the holding of a preliminary vote on ostracism in the sixth prytany (43.5), even if it is true that the vote itself was not taken until the eighth (cf. Sandy's note *ad loc.*). But the final vote was held "before the eighth prytany," if C. Hignett is right, following Carcopino, in arguing that our text of Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328 F 30) has been "telescoped" by the excerptor.⁴⁰ It might in any case be thought prudent at least to know in advance whether any candidates for election were in danger of ostracism, and better still, if any were threatened, to have the question of ostracism settled before the election was held. However that may be, the election, though it might in some circumstances be postponed till a later date, would fall normally in the seventh prytany: i.e., conventionally in Anthesterion, the eighth month of the festival calendar, (approximately February–March), but perhaps more often in the preceding month.⁴¹ This would be earlier than the

³⁷Cf. Schmid, *Gesch.d.griech.Lit.* 1.2.316–319.

³⁸The story is accepted by Wade-Gery (cf. note 11 above).

³⁹Cf. A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*² revised by J. Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford 1968) 40–41.

⁴⁰*Hist. of the Ath. Const.* 165. F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* 3b Suppl. vol. 1, p. 316, comes to a similar conclusion about the sense of the passage.

⁴¹Cf. Sandys' note on 44.4 in his edition of *Ath. Pol.* (London 1893); G. Busolt, *Griechische Staatskunde*² revised by H. Swoboda 2 (Munich 1926) 990; Hignett, *Hist. of the Ath. Const.* 347; W. Schwahn in *RE* Suppl. 6 (1935) 1074. But, according to the tables compiled by J. Kirchner in *IG* 2² pars quarta, fasc. 1 (Berlin 1918) pp. 29–30, the epigraphical evidence shows the seventh prytany falling in Gamelion more often than

celebration of the City Dionysia in the following month, Elaphebolion (approximately March–April), evidently from the eleventh to the thirteenth.⁴² We possess no recorded correspondence between the prytany and festival calendars for this season in 441, but the nineteenth of Elaphebolion was the seventh day of the eighth prytany in 332/1;⁴³ the

in Anthesterion. However, these inscriptions are from a later period, for which the relations between calendars are better understood. In regard to the fifth century we know that in one year (415 or 414) the seventh prytany fell, at least in part, in Gamelion: cf. W. K. Pritchett in *Hesperia* 22 (1953) 288. I am indebted to Professor Pritchett for calling my attention to the last two references. How long the election might be postponed, at a much later period and presumably in exceptional circumstances, is shown by *IG* 2² pars prima, fasc. 2 (Berlin 1916) no. 892 of 188/7, which puts it in Mounychion.

⁴²Cf. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dramatic Festivals*³ 65–66; also the “Festkalender” in L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932). It is noted by Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* 135–136, as by Jebb xlvi, note 1 and Sandys (cf. note 41 above), that the festival fell after the “normal date” of the election of generals. That the Lenaea, which fell before the middle of Gamelion, occurred after the election of the generals in 425 is now argued by M. V. Molitor in *CR* n.s. 19 (1969) 141 on the basis of Professor B. D. Meritt’s reconstruction of the calendar of 426/5 and the old problem of the apparent discrepancy between Aristoph. *Acharn.* 593 (where Lamachos is στρατηγός) and 1073–1074 (where he accepts directions from the στρατηγοί). He suggests that Lamachus had been elected general by the time of the play’s production but had not yet been installed in office. Reconstructions of the calendar apart, I see nothing against the explanation of *Acharn.* 593 proposed by van Leeuwen and approved by Starkie and Rennie, that this inflated verse is another parody of Euripides’ *Telephus* (cf. 577b and Schol.), στρατηγός being used in its poetic (Soph. *Ant.* 8 and *Philoct.* 264) and not its political sense: cf. also E. W. Handley and J. Rea, “The *Telephus* of Euripides,” *ICS Bull.* Suppl. no. 5 (1957) 35. In that case Lamachus appears in the play as a taxiarch (so van Leeuwen and Rennie).

⁴³*IG* 2².345; cf. E. J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (London 1968) 36. Scholarly opinions concerning the relation between the festival and the prytany calendar are at present too divided to permit a non-specialist to say much more than that a case may be made for at least an approximate correspondence of the kind used here. The degree of variation that occurred is disputed by our two leading calendarists: Professor B. D. Meritt holds that divergences between the two calendars were not excessively disturbing and were regularly and promptly rectified; cf. *The Athenian Year* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1961) 103, 104, 116. Professor W. K. Pritchett argues for wide variations between the regularities of the prytany calendar and the fluctuations of the archon’s festival calendar, rising to as much as 29 or 30 days, though no differences of this magnitude are known for the fifth century. Cf. the list of correspondences for the fifth century in W. K. Pritchett and O. Neugebauer, *The Calendars of Athens* (Cambridge, Mass. 1947) 107–108 and the literary evidence in Pritchett’s *Ancient Athenian Calendars on Stone* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1963) 327–328. Meritt however writes, in *The Athenian Year* 161–162: “It is noticeable that a high percentage of those irregularities in which three or four or more days were added to the festival calendar occurred in months where they may be associated quite definitely, or most probably, with intentional postponements of the major Athenian festivals, the Panathenaia and the City Dionysia.” Variations of this kind in Elaphebolion, 441 would favour the case argued here, because they would require that the City Dionysia follow the elections of the seventh prytany at an interval longer than the normal.

festival therefore began in that year near the end of the seventh prytany and after the normal date of the election, unless there was intercalation or suppression of days in the festival calendar.

Although there is no certain evidence that Aristotle's rule concerning the time of the election was valid in the fifth century, Aristophanes' burlesque account of the omens that accompanied Cleon's election in 424 (*Nub.* 581 ff.) makes this probable. His reference to the moon (ἡ σελήνη δ' ἐξέλειπεν τὰς ὁδοὺς) strongly suggests an eclipse.⁴⁴ Of the sun the chorus say that "he declared that he would not shine for you, if Cleon were to become general" (οὐ φανεῖν ἔφασκεν ὑμῖν, εἰ στρατηγῆσοι Κλέων). The difference in tense between the two relevant verbs (ἐξέλειπεν and φανεῖν) may be taken to support the view that the election fell between two eclipses. In fact, there was an eclipse of the moon on October 9th, 425 and another of the sun on March 21st, 424. According to this view, which has been widely held, Aristophanes is not describing the omens of the day of the election but is combining, for the sake of comic exaggeration, both the astronomical peculiarities of the Athenian year in which Cleon was elected (ἡνίχ' ἤρεισθε στρατηγόν): they are proof of the *Clouds*' concern for Athens. On this interpretation, the generals were elected before March 21st, though probably not long before. The alternative explanation, that Aristophanes is referring only to bad weather which obscured sun and moon on the day of Cleon's election, fits the descriptions and the discrimination between tenses less well and assumes an election under conditions which Aristotle's rule might be thought to preclude.⁴⁵

But now an obstacle must be faced. A. W. Gomme points out that there is no evidence apart from the *Clouds* for Cleon's election as general and that, as we know for certain the names of seven generals of 424/3 in addition to the three who had been in Sicily but were dismissed at Athens in the summer of 424, there is no room for Cleon.⁴⁶ In spite of Aristophanes' use of the noun *στρατηγός* and the verb *στρατηγεῖν*, Gomme inclines to think that Aristophanes is referring to the decision to send Cleon to Sphacteria in the summer of 425 and not to his election as general in the early spring of 424. In spite of the authority of its author, this interpretation can be shown to be vulnerable to fatal criticism.

The chorus of *Clouds* have just explained that it is because of their care for the city's welfare that they send omens of thunder and rain to deter the citizens from senseless military enterprises. The two eclipses are instances of the same concern, but the Athenians, in their folly, chose Cleon in the face of the disapproval of the heavens. In spite of all this,

⁴⁴Cf. *LSJ* s.v. ἐκλείπω, II.1, and the Scholiast *ad loc.*

⁴⁵For this alternative reading of the passage, cf. H. B. Mayor in *JHS* 59 (1939) 63, note 3 and K. J. Dover's note *ad loc.* in his edition of the *Clouds* (Oxford 1968).

⁴⁶*Hist. Comm.* vol. 3, pp. 506 and 526-527.

the *Clouds*, benevolent as ever, will show how to retrieve this disastrous step. The city can still arrange matters for the best by convicting Cleon of bribery and theft and committing him to the stocks.

Gomme himself confesses that it is a difficulty for his interpretation that there is still a question, in the spring of 423, how to avoid the consequences of a foolish choice of a military commander for Sphacteria. But he seems not to have noticed how serious this difficulty is. Cleon's command at Sphacteria presumably came to an end soon after his return to Athens in August, which occurred less than twenty days after he was commissioned.⁴⁷ Aristophanes was well aware of the immense prestige that accrued to Cleon as a result of his feat and he never tires in the *Knights* of 424 in satirising his boastfulness on this point.⁴⁸ There could have been no purpose whatever in advising the Athenians, in the *Clouds* a year later, how to escape the ruinous consequences of their choice, if Cleon's command had proved a brilliant success and ceased to exist almost a year and half before the production of the play.

The mention of the two eclipses makes no better sense on this interpretation. The lunar eclipse of October 9th, 425 occurred more than two months after the assembly's choice fell on Cleon and could have done nothing to deter the Athenians from their decision. And if the sun vowed, on the day when the decision was made, that he would subsequently hide himself, he waited more than seven months before giving proof of his displeasure.

Gomme finds it surprising that Aristophanes, if he was giving an account of the omens of the year, should have failed to include the earthquake of 424 mentioned by Thucydides (4.52.1). As he himself concedes, we do not know that Athens was affected by the earthquake; but even if it was, there could be no reason for the *Clouds* to claim credit for it, as they might for the two eclipses, nor could they represent it as a warning against the choice of Cleon in the preceding year.

As for the number of known generals, Gomme does not maintain that the point is conclusive. In fact, we do not know that the three generals in Sicily were elected in 424. According to Thucydides (4.65.3) they returned to Athens in the summer of 424, after concurring in the general truce arranged by the Greek cities of Sicily. Two of them were then sent into exile and the third fined by the Athenians, and all presumably deprived of office, on a charge of accepting bribes. They must then have been replaced on the Board by three other generals.⁴⁹ If the original three had been elected in the spring, were dismissed soon after taking command,

⁴⁷Cf. Thuc. 4.39.2 and Gomme's note.

⁴⁸*Equit.* 76, 355, 393-394, 702, 742-743, 846, 1005-1053, 1058-1059, 1166-1167, 1172, 1201.

⁴⁹On the 13 generals of 426/5 and the necessity of assuming by-elections, cf. Lewis in *JHS* 81 (1961) 119, note 11; 120.

and replaced by three especially-elected generals, there must have been at least thirteen generals elected in that year. If on the other hand they held commands that had been assigned to them in the spring of 425, were taken up in the summer of the same year, and laid down a year later, they were never elected in 424 and there is ample room for Cleon's name to be added to those of the seven who are known to have held office in the year 424/3. In either case there is nothing here to prevent our believing, on the evidence of Aristophanes, that Cleon was elected general in the spring of 424.

There seems therefore no good reason to doubt that Aristophanes refers in the *Clouds* to the election of Cleon as general at some time earlier, but probably not much earlier, than the solar eclipse of March 21st.

Aristophanes also provides, I believe, a *terminus post quem* for Cleon's election. The *Knights* was produced in Athens at the Lenaea in Gamelion, the seventh month of the festival calendar (approximately January–February).⁵⁰ In the play Cleon is subjected to unrelenting attacks for theft, corruption, extortion, and blackmail, but it is made equally clear that he is at the height of his power. He stands astride Greece, with one foot on the field of his great victory at Pylos, the other on the base of his political power in the assembly at Athens (75–76). He never ceases boasting of his brilliant military exploit and rejoices in his right to dine at the Prytaneum in a style more sumptuous than was ever voted for Pericles (282–283). All of this accords very well with Cleon's position in Athens in January–February, 424, only six months after Sphacteria. When so much attention is given in the play to his boasts about his power and distinctions, it is striking that there is nowhere a mention of his election as general, which would have been obligatory if it had already occurred and is given full play in the *Clouds* of the next year. It seems a highly probable inference that the election took place after the Lenaea of 424: therefore between January and March 21st.

Aristophanes does not provide evidence that will permit more precise dating, but it is heartening to notice that his evidence, so far as it goes, gives support to the assumption that Aristotle's rule for the holding of elections held in the fifth, as well as in the fourth, century. For, in spite of our uncertainties about correspondences between calendars, it seems reasonable to suppose that the seventh prytany fell within the period required by the evidence of Aristophanes.

On the evidence used here, that of Aristotle and Aristophanes, we have reason to believe that the normal date for the election was in the seventh prytany, which is conventionally taken to correspond roughly

⁵⁰Cf. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dramatic Festivals*³ 25.

with Anthesterion (approximately February–March) but may well be earlier, whereas the City Dionysia was regularly held in Elaphebolion (approximately March–April) and that in 424 the election was held after the Lenaea (approximately January–February) and somewhat earlier than the solar eclipse of March 21st. The argument remains general, the correspondences approximate, and exceptions conceivable, but I believe that there is a *prima facie* case for accepting the following sequence: the Lenaea; the seventh prytany and the election of generals; the City Dionysia and the solar eclipse of March 21st, 424.⁵¹ As for 441, the general question of correspondences between calendars is too hypothetical to be helpful. But it is clear that there is no obstacle to prevent belief that the election preceded the City Dionysia in that year also and the confirmation of Aristotle's rule and the parallel of 424 may suggest, though they cannot prove, that this was the case. If that was so, the election of generals in 441 should not have been affected by the outcome of the competition in tragedy of the same year.

None of these arguments is beyond doubt, but together they make a presumptive case against dating the *Antigone* in 441.⁵² On that assumption, it becomes desirable to fix the date in 442 and to assume that the enhanced reputation which Sophocles gained by his success with the play had not been forgotten by the Athenians when the next election occurred in the following year.⁵³

Alternatively, it is possible, though it seems less probable, to dismiss outright the story told in the Argument.⁵⁴ The evidence of the Parian Marble concerning Euripides' victory is still an obstacle to 441 and Wilamowitz' suggestion then is sensible, that the explanation given by the Argument (the *propter hoc*) is an embroidery of the fact that the election followed the play (*post hoc*). Wilamowitz himself left the question of date undecided, because 442 requires that Sophocles composed the play (and the rest of the trilogy) in 443/2, while he might be thought to be fully occupied by his duties as Hellenotamias. But, although the Board was collectively responsible in that year for a revision of the tribute, we do not know how onerous the functions of the Chairman were nor how seriously Sophocles took them.⁵⁵ On this hypothesis also

⁵¹Professor B. D. Meritt, who judges the particular question of this sequence of events in 424 largely by epigraphical evidence and in the wider context of a calendarist, kindly writes: "the case (for the sequence) is not *prima facie* but iron-clad".

⁵²Cf. also Perrotta, *Sofocle* 23, note 5 and Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* 135–136.

⁵³I do not know why Wade-Gery (cf. note 11 above), who accepts the evidence of the Argument, prefers 441.

⁵⁴So U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aristoteles und Athen* 2 (Berlin 1893) 298, Perrotta, *Sofocle* 23, and others.

⁵⁵The Chairman of the Hellenotamiae had no distinctive duties, according to Jameson in *TAPA* 86 (1955) 75.

442 is preferable to 441.⁵⁶ On the other side, 443 seems too early to have served as the historical basis of the anecdote, and if the anecdote is not grounded in fact, we have no means of dating the play.

There is no other external evidence by which the *Antigone* can be dated. But the mention of Italy as a haunt of Dionysus in *Ant.* 1118–1119 is easily compatible with the view that the play was composed and produced in the late 40's, at a time when the new colony at Thurii (founded 444/3) was a matter of public interest at Athens.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, TORONTO

⁵⁶It is to be noted that 441 was supported by E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Antikes* 4 (Stuttgart and Berlin 1915) 461 and A. W. Pickard-Cambridge in *OCD s.v.* Sophocles. Webster, *Introduction* 2 and note 3, 6, 11–12, 181–182 strangely makes Euripides the victor in 442, dates the *Antigone* in 443 or 441, and makes Sophocles a colleague of Thucydides, the son of Melesias, in 443/2. For the most recent support of 443 as the date of the *Antigone*, cf. W. M. Calder, III, "Sophokles' Political Tragedy, *Antigone*," *GRBS* 9 (1968) 389–407.