

AESCHINES 2.12–18: A STUDY IN RHETORIC AND CHRONOLOGY

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IN THESE SECTIONS of his speech *On the False Embassy* Aeschines gives a brief account of a series of events that led from the first mention of peace with Philip—by the Euboean ambassadors who had come in the spring of 348¹ in order to make peace with Athens after her decisive victory in Euboea—to the meeting of the Athenian Assembly at which the members of the First Embassy to Philip were chosen. The account is clearly incomplete, as far as even major political events were concerned, as we know from other evidence (some of it provided by Aeschines himself) regarding events and decisions at Athens during this period. It concentrates on what directly concerns the theme of peace with Philip. Our purpose here is not a study of the whole period, but the more limited one of trying to sort out the story that Aeschines is telling us, and of drawing attention to the fact that the traditional scholarly interpretation of that story,² on which modern accounts of the development of Athenian negotiations with Philip are largely based, seems to have misunderstood Aeschines' principles and purpose in telling the story. Detailed analysis of this passage, here attempted (as far as we know) for the first time, will also provide an insight into the skill of an orator who is not often sufficiently appreciated as a literary artist, either by students of Greek prose or by scholars who have to use the facts he provides as historical evidence.

¹The *terminus post quem* is in practice offered by the victory of Tamynae, though Phocion stayed on the island a little longer, organizing the fruits of the victory (Plut. *Phoc.* 13 f.). The battle was fought shortly before the Dionysia, i.e., about mid-March. (See Beloch, *GG* 3².2.278 for the sources and chronology. The details are too complex to be discussed here, and can in any case not be reconstructed with certainty.) Tamynae was the battle that saved Athens from great danger and led to the surrender of the opposing Euboean force (Aesch. 3.86) and to Phocion's reorganization, followed by his return. (*IG* II² 207, where he is a commander on Lesbos, probably does not belong in this year: see M. J. Osborne, "Athens and Orontes," *BSA* 66 [1971] 297–321, at 307–310. [We owe this reference to a reader for this journal.]) The peace embassy from Euboea presumably came to Athens at this point, and the soldiers sent to Tamynae were back not long (it seems) after the Dionysia (Dem. 39.17). How the disastrous defeat of Molossus fits into this, we do not know, except that it must come some time later. Beloch is probably right in making him the commander of the garrison Phocion had left on the island.

²E.g., A. Schaefer, *Demosthenes und seine Zeit*² 2 (Leipzig 1885) 165 ff.; and recently G. L. Cawkwell, "Aeschines and the Peace of Philocrates," *REG* 73 (1960) 416–438, at 417; J. R. Ellis, *Philip II and Macedonian Imperialism* (London etc. 1976) 100; G. T. Griffith, in N. G. L. Hammond and G. T. Griffith, *A History of Macedonia* 2 (Oxford 1979) 329; G. Wirth, *Philipp II* (Stuttgart etc. 1985) 80.

The story has always been interpreted as proceeding in what we may call linear fashion, through a series of items which can be numbered for convenience: (1) Euboean embassy; (2) capture of Phrynon by privateers during the Olympic truce; (3) ransoming of Phrynon; (4) request by Phrynon to send an envoy to Philip to have his money returned; (5) election of Ctesiphon for this purpose; (6) return of Ctesiphon with (? the money and with) a message of peace and good will; (7) vote by Assembly honoring Ctesiphon; (8) motion by Philocrates that Philip be allowed to send a herald and ambassadors, passed unanimously; (9) attack on this as *παρὰ νόμον*; (10) Demosthenes' success in securing Philocrates' acquittal; (11) "about the same time" (as item 10), capture of Olynthus with many Athenians in the city, including Iatrocles and Eueratus; (12) plea by their families for ransoming (?) them supported by Philocrates and Demosthenes; (13) Aristodemus sent to Philip for this purpose; (14) Aristodemus fails to report, but Iatrocles returns, released without ransom; (15) Iatrocles tells "the same story" and some people blame Aristodemus for not reporting; (16) Aristodemus, summoned to appear, reports to the Boule and Assembly that Philip is a friend of Athens and even wants an alliance; (17) Demosthenes moves a crown for Aristodemus; (18) Philocrates moves to elect ten ambassadors to discuss peace and common interests with Philip.

Some improbabilities in this story are apparent. First, a minor point: the events numbered (3) to (11) must all take place in the summer and early autumn of 348, on a rather crowded timetable. Of the few chronological indications we have, two impose these limits. In 348 the Olympic games seem to have ended on August 1.³ The duration of the Olympic truce is not known. Miller seems to put it only during the month from the first full moon after the solstice to the end of the festival; i.e., it would have started on July 2.⁴ E. M. Harris has recently drawn attention to the parallel of the Eleusinian truce,⁵ the duration of which happens to be recorded on a fifth-century document⁶ as being about 55 days, from one month before the festival to sixteen or seventeen days after. He suggests that at Olympia as well, those attending must have been given time to travel there and back. The parallel is not precise and calculations can only be approximate. But

³They ended on the sixteenth day of the month (Schol. Pi. *Ol.* 5.8), i.e., normally the day after the full moon, which in 348 fell on July 31 (S. G. Miller, "The Date of the Olympic Festivals," *AthMitt* 90 [1975] 215–231, at 223; for the implication that the Games ended on the following day, see 228).

⁴Miller 221, 223. Miller equates the truce with the *hieromenia*, the month during which the athletes had to be present at Olympia.

⁵In his Harvard doctoral dissertation, *The Political Career of Aeschines* (Ann Arbor, Mich. 1983) 158, n. 61, cf. 168, n. 157. The suggestion must in principle be sound, but cannot lead to precise results, since Eleusis did not involve any athletes, whereas at Olympia the athletes had to report one month before the festival and must have been able to travel there under truce.

⁶*IG* I³ 6, said to be of about 460 B.C.

Phrynon must have been captured between some time (perhaps) early in June and mid-August.⁷ He was probably ransomed a few weeks after his capture.

This gives an approximate date for (3). The rest of our information, unfortunately, occurs only in the form of archon dates. Yet some conclusions seem legitimate. The three Athenian votes to aid Olynthus, all before the end of 349/8, must mean—especially in view of the time-table of events on Euboea—that the last vote came not long before the end of the year. As for the fall of Olynthus, all that we know is that it was in the following archon year (348/7).⁸ It is closely linked, however, to the last Athenian decree to send aid, since we are also told that the fleet taking 2000 Athenians under Chares to Olynthus was “caught in a storm” and, while still on the way, received the news that Olynthus had fallen by treason.⁹ Since the main points of reference are not precisely determinable (we do not know when the vote was taken, when the new archon year began, or how long it took to fit out a fleet and expedition), precise conclusions cannot be hoped for. But storms, in the area, are known to be characteristic of the summer months. The Etesian winds, in particular, were a well-known phenomenon in antiquity—so well known that it seems unlikely that a fleet carrying 2000 citizens would set out during the period when they were expected to be blowing.¹⁰ It is more probable that the storm that “caught” (the verb is ἀπολαμβάνειν) the fleet was unexpected, i.e., that it sailed when the Etesians were supposed to have subsided. If so, this gets us to the end of September as the time when Olynthus was betrayed to Philip. The whole series of events therefore has to fit into a time from (say) early July at the earliest to the end of September. While this is not impossible, it implies unusual speed of action.

⁷One month before the festival (cf. nn. 4 and 5) would be July 2. But as we have seen, there must have been some time before that when athletes could travel in safety. After the festival we may follow the Athenian parallel to arrive at mid-August. The second hypothesis to Dem. 19 puts Phrynon's capture on his way to Olympia; but as Harris points out (158, n. 62), the author shows no precise knowledge and may well have been guessing.

⁸The information regarding the Athenian resolutions is provided in Dion. Hal. 1 *Amm.* 9, from Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328 FF 49–51). The fall of Olynthus is dated *ibid.* 10, no doubt also from Philochorus, who seems to be the source throughout (F 56). The trial of Philocrates also belongs to 348/7 (Aesch. 3.26) Aeschines in fact implies rather a short interval before the end of that year, but since the reference is in the speech of 330, this must not be pressed.

⁹See Suda s.v. Κάρανος for the storm and the fall of the city, and Schol. Dem. 21.197 for the news and its effect. The “storm” was taken by Schaefer to refer to the Etesian winds, and he has generally been followed. But see text and next note.

¹⁰The dates of the Etesian winds are variously given in the sources (see A. Rehm, “Etesiai,” *RE* 6.1 [1907] 713–717, and cf. R. Böker, “Prodromoi,” *RE* 23.1 [1957] 96–102), but the two closest in date to our year produce reassuring agreement. Eudoxus (F 147a Lass.) lists them as going on for 55 days from the (heliacal) rising of Sirius, which, at 38° (i.e., in Athens), would at that time be from July 28 to September 20 (for the rising of the constellations, see E. J.

What really damns this interpretation, however, is that, if the series (3)–(10) precedes the fall of Olynthus, it comes at the very time when the Athenians were increasing their efforts to prevent the city's fall—a time when (so Aeschines 2.15 tells us) “many Athenians” were fighting by the side of the Olynthians and Athenian efforts were just culminating in the decision to send Chares with a citizen force.¹¹ How, at just this time, Phrynon could get the idea that Philip might be persuaded—no doubt by a sermon on religious propriety—to return to him some money which he had either just calmly pocketed or not received at all (for Aeschines does not tell us whether it was paid to him or to the pirates); and how, at this time, the Athenians could enthusiastically receive a peace offer by Philip—those puzzles are by no means easy to answer.

Finally, why, after Philocrates' brilliant vindication (for the prosecutor did not even get the minimum of votes to save him from a severe penalty), do we hear no more about the proposal to allow Philip to send ambassadors, or indeed about any peace moves at all, until the topic of peace starts up again after *another* embassy, sent to ransom *other* Athenians, obviously some time after the fall of Olynthus, and probably some months after?¹²

There seems to be one obvious way in which Phrynon can have got the idea that Philip might be willing to refund an Athenian's ransom money: that was when he saw, after the fall of Olynthus, that one of the Athenians captured had actually been sent home free of charge, and apparently with a

Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World*² [London etc. 1968] 113–114). Eudoxus seems to include five days of the *prodromoi* in his count. The Hippocratic *Epidemiae* (1.13) puts the Etesians in the time from the rising of Sirius to the rising of Arcturus, which gives precisely the same dates for Athens. (It does not mention the *prodromoi*.) In view of the very approximate nature of our calculations, this difference of five days at the beginning, and the difference between the actual and the perceived rising, need not be discussed. It is theoretically possible that the fleet could have sailed before the beginning of the winds. But it seems unlikely that it could be fitted out as quickly as this would imply, and no one has suggested it.

¹¹The “many Athenians” presumably included the cavalry that had been sent from Euboea to Olynthus (Dem. 21.197), and perhaps some infantry who had come with Charidemus, if the scholiast (see above, n. 9) had any basis for his statement that some Athenians (whom he actually makes part of Chares' expedition) “returned” to Thrace. But it is clear from Philochorus' report that the Olynthians, before the third expedition, requested and obtained one *μή ξευκλήν, ἀλλ' αὐτῶν Ἀθηναίων* that the first two expeditions had consisted mostly of mercenaries.

¹²The most likely time is presumably after the Macedonian Olympics, celebrated some time after the fall of Olynthus, had shown (a) that the Athenians could not hope for free generosity from Philip for their prisoners; (b) that he was willing to release some of the prisoners captured at Olynthus in special circumstances. We do not know the precise date of the Macedonian Olympics, but it is clear that they fell between campaigning seasons (see Harris [above, n. 5] 159, n. 64). Arr. *Anab.* 1.10.1 and 1.11.1 show that they cannot have come before about the end of September. Any time between this and the beginning of the next campaigning season must at present be regarded as possible.

message of good will. Phrynon's request, and with it Ctesiphon's mission, most naturally belong after Iatrocles' return. In terms of our list, let us move items (4) through (7), and with them presumably (8) through (10), to follow item (14), and to coincide in time with (15), which went on over some time. In view of the attested dates we have noted, there is certainly plenty of time for (4) through (10) to follow the fall of Olynthus and easily fit in before Aristodemus' report, if indeed this was followed at once by the election of the First Embassy to Philip, which can be dated to early February 346.¹³

Scholars seem to have been misled by Aeschines' phrase linking (10) and (11): ὑπὸ δὲ τοῖς αὐτοῖς καιροῖς Ὀλυνθος ἔαλω κτλ. This is taken to make the fall of Olynthus contemporaneous with the last-mentioned event, i.e., the acquittal of Philocrates, or at most the preceding series of events, items (6) through (10), which cannot have taken long, even if Aeschines' implication that (7) and (8) belonged to a single meeting of the Assembly is slightly exaggerated; for there is no good reason to think that (9) did not follow closely upon (8), to prevent its being put into effect, or that the actual trial of such an important issue was long postponed. Everyone will agree that the vague phrase expressing contemporaneity may cover a month or so, which would make little difference to the chronological structure of Aeschines' account.

But once we closely attend to the point, it will be clear that there is no straightforward answer to the question of precisely *what* we are to imagine to be roughly contemporaneous with the fall of Olynthus. There is nothing to exclude our interpreting the Greek as including the whole of (at least) (4) through (10) as approximately contemporaneous with the statement about Olynthus.

The other side of the time equation merits equally careful scrutiny. It is, of course, possible, but by no means necessary, to understand the phrase to mean that the fall of Olynthus was roughly contemporary with all or some of the items in (4) through (10); which would not help to resolve the puzzle of Phrynon's unseasonable optimism. Yet we must now attend to a well-known point of Greek style and grammar, which is too often forgotten by scholars when they establish chronologies on the basis of Greek texts. This is the amply documented use of the aorist to stand for a pluperfect—a tense not very much used in Greek prose. The standard grammars give long lists

¹³The date depends on acceptance of Aeschines' statement (2.134) that "on the same day" on which the Assembly was discussing peace they received Proxenus' letter and the report by the *spondophoroi* that the Phocians had refused the truce and had arrested the Athenian envoys. The (Lesser) Mysteries, which alone can be meant here, began on 15 Anthesterion (Plut. *Demetr.* 26.1). The return of the *spondophoroi* has been variously dated by scholars, but Harris (above, n. 5, 144 ff.) adduces convincing arguments in support of a date in early Anthesterion. Even if Aeschines' insistence on "the same day" is exaggerated, there was clearly no long interval between the events he mentions. But it is likely that such a striking coincidence would indeed be remembered a few years later.

of examples,¹⁴ and readers of historical authors must constantly be on their guard to recognize them. We are fully entitled to translate Aeschines as saying: “About the same time (as some or all of the preceding series of events) Olynthus *had fallen*,” etc. That is to say, it is quite possible to take him as meaning that Olynthus had fallen, and Philip was holding a large number of Athenians captured there, at the time when items (4) through (10), or (3) through (10), occurred, hence roughly over the same span of time as the events to which he now turns his attention. For it is only to that series (starting with the attempts to secure the release of the prisoners) that the capture of Olynthus is relevant: hence its introduction at precisely this point in the account. There is therefore nothing in Aeschines’ account that excludes our regarding (4) (Phrynon’s request) as coming after (14) and in the course of (15); which, as we saw, makes the series more comprehensible.

The time equation established by the phrase ὑπὸ τοὺς αὐτοὺς καιροὺς has no single solution. It was not intended to have one, for the chronology is rhetorical, not historical. The equation, with its statement about Olynthus placed where it is needed for the immediate action, joins two discrete series of events, two *logoi*, as (borrowing a convention from discussions regarding Herodotus) we might call them: the Phrynon-Philocrates *logos*, intrinsically independent of Olynthus, and the Aristodemus-Philocrates *logos*, for which the fall of Olynthus is the background. The two series are constructed with remarkable artistic care to produce a striking parallelism. Each begins with the capture of Athenian citizens and proceeds through their return, and a peace message from Philip, to a peace vote in the Assembly. But there is more subtle artistic structure over the whole narrative. The first of the *logoi*, after the crescendo built up to the triumphant vindication of Philocrates, breaks off abruptly, with the action left in suspense. At this point the orator places the new introduction regarding the fall of Olynthus, after which we start at the level at which the first *logos* began. The second is now similarly built up, but this time to the climax of positive action by the vote on the First Embassy.

At the culmination of the crescendo, in each case, stands the figure of Philocrates—vindicated but left mysteriously ineffectual the first time, reaching the fulfilment of his aims the second time. More important still, for the structure of Aeschines’ case: linked with Philocrates, at the end of each *logos*, stands the figure of Demosthenes. At the end of the first he secures the acquittal of Philocrates and the vindication of his peace motion; at the end of the second it is he who moves a crown for Aristodemus, the transmitter of Philip’s message of good will and proposal for peace and indeed alliance; and it is this vote that leads straight (ῥηθέντων δὲ τούτων) to Philocrates’ motion to

¹⁴Kühner-Gerth, *Griechische Grammatik* 2.1, 169 (cf. 151); Schwyzer-Debrunner, *Griechische Grammatik* 2, 299 f. One of the most striking cases in the collection is from Thucydides, and many more can easily be found in Diodorus.

send an embassy—not merely, as in the first *logos*, to receive one. In the following two sections, strengthening the links he has artfully created, Aeschines reports that it was Philocrates who nominated Demosthenes to the Embassy, and that it was, in turn, Demosthenes who secured the possibility of including Aristodemus.

We may wonder whether Aeschines meant to deceive his audience as to the chronological sequence, as he has apparently succeeded in deceiving later generations. Perhaps not. Many of them would sufficiently remember the actual sequence of events only a few years earlier. Indeed, Aeschines, as always, appeals to their memory when it is convenient for him: in this instance at the very beginning, to support his statement (2.12) that it was the Euboean embassy that brought Philip's first expression of interest in peace. Of course, he did not greatly care whether they were deceived in this respect or not. His structure, as we have been concerned to point out, was rhetorical, not historical, and he had achieved his effect without, at any rate, being faulted for actual deception by any who did remember. He had merely sorted events out for them. If some were led to think that there had been actual peace negotiations with Philip while Athenians were dying, and being captured, supporting Olynthus against him, and at a time when Athens had just voted the additional help requested by the Olynthians—if, in fact, some took him to mean what modern scholars have taken him to mean, rather less excusably—that was no concern of his. Yet the trick was not altogether easy to perform, and traces of the difficulty remain in the treatment of Iatrocles.

First, Aeschines is studiously vague when he makes Iatrocles bring τοὺς αὐτοὺς λόγους from Philip (2.16): the same as *what*? The hasty listener (or reader) might suppose the same message that Aristodemus had brought—until he attends to the point that Aristodemus had not yet reported; at this stage he would settle for “the same message as before”—the one he had been told about in connection with the Euboeans and of Ctesiphon. He would be unlikely to remember that Ctesiphon in fact had not yet reported either, for Aeschines had mentioned his report in the first *logos*. But again, if anyone did have such an inconvenient memory, the orator could deny having misled anyone, for reference to the Euboeans would be enough for his purpose.

But that is not the end of the trouble caused by Iatrocles. We find that it is the reports of Iatrocles that lead to the summoning (at last) of Aristodemus and to his report. Again, Aeschines avoids asserting that Iatrocles reported to the People, but the hasty listener (or, as can be demonstrated, reader) could easily gain that impression. At most Iatrocles talked privately about what Philip had told him: he was not an ambassador and had no business reporting. But having separated Ctesiphon's report from that of Aristodemus by the structure of his narrative, Aeschines now has to make Iatrocles' vague talk lead to Aristodemus' report, conveying the slight impression that Iatrocles presented an actual report. That this was not in fact so

is clearly shown by Demosthenes, who twice tells us that there were two and only two reports about Philip's peaceful intentions (those of Ctesiphon and Aristodemus) before the First Embassy was decided on.¹⁵ And Demosthenes would have seized any chance to involve Iatrocles, surely, since Iatrocles was a friend of Aeschines' who was actually in court to give evidence on his behalf (2.126). Iatrocles provides the only pointers to Aeschines' artifice, which could not be constructed without leaving any trace at all.

It is clear that in fact the idea of negotiating with Philip became conceivable only after Olynthus had fallen, and had become an incident better forgotten.¹⁶ But the proper interpretation of Athenian relations with Philip between 348 and 346 is a complex story, which (owing to the state of our evidence) is bound to encounter problems of its own. We must repeat that this is not the purpose of the present discussion. It is contributed only as a prerequisite to such a reinterpretation, and as another warning against blind acceptance of an orator's version of events, at its most obvious reading, as straightforward fact.

It is also a much-needed tribute to Aeschines as an artist of oratory, at his best surpassing Demosthenes in subtle elegance, and no less successful in his power over the minds of historians. We have perhaps too long been held to ransom by Aeschines' art. It is time to make an effort to redeem ourselves.

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¹⁵Dem. 19.18 (the "first hopes" of peace were due to the reports to the People by Ctesiphon and Aristodemus); 19.97 (Ctesiphon and Aristodemus τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν πρώτην ἔφερον τοῦ φενακισμοῦ). Neoptolemus is mentioned along with these two at 12 and 315, once between and once before them, as a bearer of deceitful tidings from Philip. But the fact that the orator twice specifies that Ctesiphon and Aristodemus were the *first* to report to this effect, and the fact that Aeschines does not mention Neoptolemus at all, should suffice to show that his report cannot have preceded the vote for the First Embassy, which is the terminal point of Aeschines' sketch of the movement for peace.

¹⁶Philocrates' acquittal in the end was not followed up by diplomatic action because Philip chose at that very time to make an alliance with the Boeotians and send them military aid (Diod. 16.58.2, 59.2). It was not for Aeschines to say this.