

There is consensus that Timotheus' *Persians* was first performed at Athens, most likely in the period 410-408 (Basset, *CP* [1931], 160-61; Porter, *Studies in Euripides' Orestes*, 200-01; Janssen, *Timotheus Persae*, 13-22; see Hansen, *Philologus* [1984], 135-38). The dating is based upon Euripides' alleged imitation of Timotheus' pidgin Greek-speaking Phrygian in the *Orestes* (1359-1502). The view that the poem was originally performed at Athens (e.g. Hordern, *The Fragments of Timotheus*, 128-29; Wilson in *Music and the Muses*, 304-06) derives from its subject matter—the battle of Salamis—a location that remains unnamed in the extant poem.

This paper challenges Atheno-centric readings of the poem. Timotheus, a Milesian, would not declare that his city and those of the twelve Ionian cities hailed “from the Achaeans” while performing at Athens (234-36). That Ionians are Athenian colonists is a cardinal point of Athenian ideology (Hdt. 1.147.1; E. *Ion* 1570-88; Th. 1.2.6). In particular, the “noblest” and “purest Ionians,” who founded the duodecapolis of which Timotheus calls Miletus preeminent (235-36), departed from the Prytaneum of Athens (Hdt. 1.146.2; 7.95.1). Achaean heritage expresses Ionian self-definition as a people from the Peloponnese and places Ionia under “the great *hêgemôn* of Sparta” (207). Spartans used this title of themselves (Hdt. 7.228.3; Th. 1.128.7; cf. Simod. *Plataea* fr. 11.32). No poet would name Sparta or Spartans in this way at Athens.

I argue that the song's first performance is more likely in 395/94, toward the end of Agesilaus' invasion of the Persian empire (X. *HG* 3.1.3) and that Ephesus is the best location (cf. Ebeling, *AJP* [1925] 318-19). The pretext for the invasion was the belief that Artaxerxes II was preparing to launch a fleet to invade mainland Greece (X. *HG* 3.4.1-3; *Ages.* 1.6-8; cf. Plut. *Ages.* 6.1). The theme of the *Persians* plays into the rationale for the Spartan invasion. Agesilaus operated out of Ephesus; Timotheus' suppliant Phrygian claims “my Artemis, great god, will protect me at Ephesus” (160-61). This is the only Greek city besides Miletus named in the extant poem; the line has an ironic bite if uttered at Ephesus, for Agesilaus had turned the city into a “workshop of war” (X. *HG* 3.4.17; *Ages.* 1.1.4; cf. Plut. *Ages.* 9.4-5). He put the economy on a wartime footing and held contests for his warriors, who packed the gymnasium and marketplace, and dedicated their crowns to Artemis (X. *HG* 3.4.16-18; *Ages.* 1.25-28). Agesilaus orchestrated a spectacle of naked barbarians to instill contempt for the enemy in his troops (X. *HG* 3.4.19; *Ages.* 1.28). Timotheus' poem voices this spirit, depicting naked barbarians (98-103, 132-39) and describing the “white-armed hands” with which Lydians embrace Cybele in supplication and lament (126). Other than the Persians, the named peoples of the extant song are those the Spartans plundered—Phrygians, Mysians, and Lydians. Timotheus strips them of their clothes and their dignity (cf. Hall in *The Birth of the European Identity*, 60-65).

Finally, this paper examines how Timotheus adopts, modifies, and contests the tradition of Persian War narrative. Particularly important are the king's (Xerxes is never named) final injunctions to yoke his four-horse chariot, to load his “*olbos* beyond count,” and to burn his tents “so that our wealth will be no benefit to them” (174-95). Aeschylus figured the Persian defeat as the shattering of Xerxes' chariot yoke (esp. 181-99) and the ruin of Persia's *olbos* (162-64, 249-55, 823-26; cf. 751-52). Herodotus reported that the Greeks captured Xerxes' tent at the battle of Plataea (9.82). The poem questions the narrative of the great naval battle as a succession narrative. Timotheus refuses to admit the heraldic voice into his art of music (213-20), and instead defends himself against Spartan criticism, locating himself in a succession narrative (221-33). The musician and the *hêgemôn* occupy parallel but opposed positions. The Spartan *hêgemôn*, “teeming with blossoms of youth” (208) as Xerxes had (179-81; cf. A. *Pers.* 59, 252, 512, 922-27), may chase the king's “*olbos* beyond count,” but Timotheus made the *kitharis* “spring to life,” “having opened the polyhymnic treasury of the Muses.”