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Edward Anson ✦ David Hollander ✦ Timothy Howe
Joseph Roisman ✦ John Vanderspoel ✦ Pat Wheatley ✦
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Phrynichus Stratonidou Deiradiotes and the Ionia Campaign in 412 B.C.: Thuc. 8.25-27

Nikos Karkavelias

The figure of Phrynichus, the son of Stratonides from the deme Deiradiotai, became one of the most controversial ones in late fifth century Athens. Through his wholehearted involvement in the oligarchic revolution of 411 B.C. the oligarch might have emerged as one of the most prominent figures in the Athenian political scene during the oligarchic revolution, but this engagement precipitated his violent death as well. The next generations of Athenians remembered him as an arch-traitor, a hated symbol of a tyrannical regime, which in its short life did everything it could to weaken the strength of the Empire, and reduce Athens to a mere compliant follower of its enemy, Sparta. Yet, despite the almost unanimous agreement in other sources,¹ Phrynichus is presented in Thucydides (the present case under examination included) in an objective, neutral, if not outright positive light. The historian draws a picture of a man with outstanding intellectual capabilities, sound judgement, great logical faculty, rhetoric dexterity, and leadership talent. Accordingly, in this paper I shall undertake to examine Phrynichus' capabilities as a military commander in the Ionia campaign. I hope to demonstrate that, despite criticism levelled at the Athenian commander by modern scholars, Thucydides' judgement of his performance during that campaign, and in particular Phrynichus' decision to decline battle at sea, against a Peloponnesian fleet that unexpectedly arrived in the vicinity of Miletus, and withdraw instead to Samos in safety, was sound and correct.

The land battle at Miletus

In the autumn of 412 B.C., Phrynichus along with two more generals, Scironides and Onomacles, was entrusted the most important and ambitious Athenian counter-offensive in Ionia since the disaster in Sicily, the objective of which was to re-conquer lost territory and quell the wave of defections among Athens' allies.² The three men were in charge of a not insignificant force consisting of forty-eight ships and 3500 heavy infantry.³ After a short stay in

¹ e.g., [Lys.] 20.11-12; Lys.25.8, 10; Ar. *Frogs* 686-691; Arist. *Politics* 1305a36-1305b27. Phrynichus is depicted in these sources as a sycophant, opportunist, trickster, and plotter of schemes respectively.

² On the date of the expedition, late September to beginning of October, see G. Busolt 1893-1904: 1432; A. Gomme, A. Andrewes and K. Dover 1945-1981 vol.5: 58.

³ D. Lewis 1961 drew attention to the possibility that Phrynichus may have been elected general *ex apanton* in 412. He pointed to the possible existence of a relationship between the general and a Scironides who proposed a decree at a meeting of Leontis tribe in the 340s ([D.] 58.18), in which case there would have been two generals from tribe Leontis in 412. Since Phrynichus was undoubtedly the most authoritative figure of the two, he would have been elected *ex apanton*. If this contention of Lewis is valid, the implications for Phrynichus' public image and prestige that year become obvious. Lewis' doubted the name Scironides on the grounds of its negative associations with the mythical Megarian bandit, thinking it awkward for an Athenian to bear this name, and he proposed the reading Κίρωνίδης, attested in the Vatican ms. B in Thucydides (he admits, however, that in

Samos for regrouping and replenishment, the task force landed at Miletus, the subduing of which, was the main objective of the mission. At the gates of the city they won a victory after a pitched battle against the Milesian hoplites, Chalkideus and his Peloponnesian troops and Tissaphernes with his horse and mercenaries respectively. But later on the same evening, news reached the Athenian camp that a newly arrived Peloponnesian fleet was approaching. Commanding this fleet was Therimenes, who had been ordered to deliver fifty-five ships (twenty-two from Sicily and thirty-three from the Peloponnese) to the Peloponnesian admiral Astyochus. Therimenes had first anchored at Leros, and when he got information about the Athenians' presence at Miletus, he moved to Teichioussa in the Iasian gulf with a view to reconnoitring the area. There he met Alcibiades who briefed him on the critical situation that had evolved after the Athenian victory. The Athenian exile urged Therimenes not to abandon Miletus at that crucial moment, for otherwise the Peloponnesians would lose every hope of ever holding the entire Ionia region. Thereupon, it was agreed that the next day the Peloponnesians would attack the Athenian force at dawn, and try to save Miletus from falling into the hands of the enemy.⁴

The war council at the Athenian camp

When news of the arrival of an enemy force in the area reached the Athenian camp, a war council among the generals took place to determine what course of action was to be taken.⁵ In this council, Phrynichus emerged as a charismatic leader, an officer who commanded respect from his fellow officers and managed to carry the day by sheer weight of his arguments. He unequivocally stated that, as far as it was in his power, he would not allow the Athenian force to stay and offer battle to the Peloponnesians at that particular moment. It would not be prudent, he argued, to risk their necks in a single battle, especially when they

[Demosthenes]' passage the sound tradition reads Σκιρωνίδης). S. Hornblower, citing OCD³ under the entry Sciron or Sciros, suggests a connection with the Attic festival of Skirophoria (2008: 822).

⁴ Thuc. 8.26. On the composition and origin of Therimenes' force, see Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol.5: 61; Hornblower 2008: 823. Thucydides, 8.17.1-3, narrates how Chalkideus and Alcibiades with twenty-five ships, of which twenty were Chians, outpaced the Athenians Strombichides and Thrasyacles, slipped from their grasp, and caused Miletus to defect. This force apparently joined Therimenes, and thus, the number of Peloponnesian ships reached eighty (cf. Busolt 1893-1904: 1435; Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol.5: 27-28).

⁵ Those certainly included Phrynichus, Onomacles and Scironides, and probably Strombichides and Thrasyacles (Busolt 1893-1904: 1434 and no 1; Gomme, Andrewes and Gomme 1981: 63); Hornblower (2008: 825-6) ingeniously remarks that there must have been present Argive officers also. But how many there could have been we have no means of knowing. We know that the entire Argive army was divided into five squadrons, and was commanded by five generals (Thuc. 5.59.5). One could argue that since the Athenians assigned the deployment of one thousand hoplites, plus the sailors for the ships, to three generals, there may have been more than one Argive general in charge of the fifteen hundred Argive hoplites. But it is not at all certain that the Argive army operated along similar lines to the Athenian. What about the allied troops?

had no clear information about the composition and size of the enemy force, since they could chose themselves the time and place of the battlefield, and fight when well-prepared and under favourable conditions. It would not be a disgrace either, if they decided to pull out from the region; rather a defeat would be more shameful. He concluded that they should think of the precarious situation in which their city had fallen; taking unnecessary risks in newly opened fronts should be avoided by all means.⁶

Brilliant, eloquent and persuasive Phrynichus' speech though it may have been, there are indications that the oligarch used other means as well to force his opinion upon his colleagues, namely deception. Thucydides narrates:

Φρύνιχος δὲ ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων στρατηγός, ὡς ἀπὸ τῆς Λέρου ἐπύθετο τὰ τῶν νεῶν σαφῶς, βουλομένων τῶν ξυναρχόντων ὑπομείναντας διανυμαχεῖν, οὐκ ἔφη οὔτ' αὐτὸς ποιῆσειν τοῦτο οὔτ' ἐκείνοις οὐδ' ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἐς δύναμιν ἐπιτρέψειν. ὅπου γὰρ [ἔξεστιν] ἐν ὑστέρῳ σαφῶς εἰδότας πρὸς ὁπόσας τε ναῦς πολεμίας καὶ ὅσας πρὸς αὐτὰς ταῖς σφετέραις ἱκανῶς καὶ καθ' ἡσυχίαν παρασκευασαμένοις ἔσται ἀγωνίσασθαι (8.27.1-2)

Phrynichus, the Athenian general, when he got exact information about the ships, although his colleagues wanted to stay and fight through a sea-battle, refused, and declared that he would not do this himself, nor would he allow anyone else, as far as it was in his power. For whenever in the future they knew the exact number of enemy ships and the proportion of their own against them, he would fight after having made ample preparations at their leisure.

It appears, thus, that Phrynichus alone was informed by his scouts about the size and composition of the Peloponnesian fleet.⁷ The shrewd oligarch correctly anticipated his

⁶ Thuc. 8.27.1-4. On the view that one of Phrynichus' colleagues, presumably Onomacles or Scironides, was Thucydides' informant on this occasion, see N. Hammond 1977: 153. Phrynichus must have been on a par with his colleagues, as far as authority and command were concerned: Dover 1960; Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol.5: 63; see, D. Hamel (1998: 84-99), for a useful discussion of the evidence. She also argues for shared responsibility and equality principle among boards of Athenian generals. Hornblower notes that there was no system of rotating command in Athens at that time (2008: 826). On Phrynichus' eloquence and persuasiveness, it is worth quoting Andrewes astute comments: 'this hammering on the word (sc. αἰσχροῦν) recalls 5.111.3. Phrynichus' opponents had evidently used the argument from αἰσχύνῃ, as the Melians did (5.104), and he repeats their word to batter them into sense' (Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol.5: 64).

⁷ Those men need not have been officially appointed by the Athenian state to serve as intelligence service, agents or scouts. It seems that Alcibiades, when he reached Ionia in 412, had set up his own private network of collecting information and delivering messages. Those men included some of his relatives, Alcibiades of Phegous, Alcibiades' cousin, Axiochus, Alcibiades' uncle, Adeimantus, Alcibiades' fellow-demesman, and Mantitheus, a mutilator of the Hermae (H. Westlake 1985: 105-108). In the famous episode of the intrigues

colleagues' fervour for fighting the enemy, and concealed the vital information about the numbers of enemy ships.⁸ In this way, he could use the uncertainty arising from his concealment to support, and finally foist on his colleagues a strategic withdrawal which, according to him, was the only sensible course of action.⁹ The experienced politician was undoubtedly able to make exceptional use of rhetoric and deception, even at critical times, to further his goals. His decision, no doubt was a controversial one; it caused friction and discontent among the allies, and led the Argives abandon the expedition in rage, and withdraw from the war altogether until its very end.¹⁰ Another point worth noting is that Phrynichus was also gravely concerned about the composition of his own naval force, and how combat-effective in relation to the Peloponnesian it was. The phrase καὶ ὅσαις πρὸς αὐτὰς ταῖς σφετέραις alludes exactly to this problem, to which we shall return later.¹¹ But first, let us see how Phrynichus' decision to withdraw has been received by modern scholars.

Modern reception

Phrynichus' performance during the Ionia campaign, and by implication Thucydides' endorsement and praise of the general, have drawn heavy criticism. In particular, two points have been made: the grave consequences that the decision to withdraw to Samos had on the chances of the Athenians to retain the whole area under their control, on the one hand, and the pessimism of Phrynichus in avoiding battle when the odds were, so the argument goes, particularly favourable, on the other. To begin with the first point, there is unanimous agreement when it comes to the price that Athens had to pay for the decision to withdraw from Miletus. The Athenians were not able to capitalize on their land victory since they had to abandon the booty on the field. Their relationships with the Argives deteriorated sharply, as the latter made their journey back home from Samos and they did not contribute to the war

between Astyochus, the Peloponnesian admiral, Alcibiades and Phrynichus, there are signs, so it has been argued, that Phrynichus had his own network of intelligence (Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 5: 119).

⁸ Andrewes comments on this passage: 'σαφῶς εἰδότας reads a little awkwardly after par. 1 ἐπύθετο τὰ τῶν νεῶν σαφῶς, which asserts that they did not know the facts of this situation: but that is a purely verbal point' (Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 5: 64). Thucydides, however, uses the word ἐπύθετο, which is in the singular.

⁹ Notice the parallel at 8.51.1: καὶ ταῦτα σαφῶς πεπυσμένος εἶη.

¹⁰ Thuc. 8.27.6; see note 12 below.

¹¹ This point seems to have escaped U. Schindel's attention, as he argues that 'daß es einen Feldherrn gäbe, der nicht wüßte ὅσαις πρὸς αὐτὰς ταῖς σφετέραις er die Schlacht beginnt, ist ganz unglaublich'. He reaches, however, a similar conclusion, namely that the apparent contradiction at 8.27.1-2 concerning the information that Phrynichus had on the size of the enemy fleet was intended by Thucydides to show his readers how skillfully the Athenian general deceived his colleagues. Schindel rightly refutes Classen-Steup's contention that this passage is another sign of incompleteness of book eight (1970: 294).

effort since then.¹² Most importantly, Athens abandoned Iasos and Amorges into the hands of his enemy Tissaphernes.¹³

With regard to the second point, Andrewes has argued that the Peloponnesians, although superior in numbers, lacked in self-confidence (an element, however, present in the troops from Sicily). Moreover, while up to that point the Peloponnesians had maintained the initiative to attack wherever they decided in order to help the cities within the Athenian *arche* to revolt, this time Therimenes had lost the initiative, since he had to force the enemy into battle if he wanted to rescue Miletus. Phrynichus, thus, had lost a unique opportunity to meet the enemy in the battlefield, and deliver a decisive blow: 'the result might have been the disaster that Phrynichus feared, but, given the numbers of the two fleets and their current standards of performance, the chances of an Athenian victory were surely high, and victory at this stage, with most of the empire intact, would have done much more for Athens than the victory at Cyzikus 18 months later.'¹⁴ This judgment on Phrynichus may be too harsh. The argument that the Peloponnesians' morale was low, or that they lacked self-confidence is almost impossible to check. Critics usually adduce Thucydides 8.30.2 τέσσαρσι καὶ ἑβδομήκοντα ναυσὶν ἑθαλασσοκράτουν to make the point that the Athenians could retain supremacy at sea even when they were inferior in numbers. This view, however, overlooks the fact that those seventy-four ships were all fast, in contrast to the case under discussion.¹⁵ Moreover, with regard to the Athenian morale, indicative is Thucydides' comment that it was only after the battle at Kynossema that the Athenians ceased to be afraid of the Peloponnesian navy, and to blame themselves because of the disaster in Sicily and their failures in smaller engagements in the Ionian war.¹⁶ It is startling, at any rate, that previous scholars have reached those negative conclusions with regard to Phrynichus' performance as commander in the battlefield without

¹² Thuc. 8.27.5. The Argives were in fact enraged about the fact that they were not given a chance to level off their humiliating defeat at the hands of the supposedly inferior Ionians from Miletus. Thucydides (5.70) hints at their impetuosity and lack of discipline when at the battle of Mantinea pictures them to advance ἐντόνως καὶ ὀργῇ (eagerly and impetuously). For the suggestion that they might have had an extra motive for wanting to stay and help Iasus, which might have been their colony, see Hornblower 1982: 112 and no 48. On an analysis of the ramifications Phrynichus' decision had for Athens, see Busolt 1893-1904: 1435; J. Lazenby 2004: 178; Hornblower 2008: 828.

¹³ On Iasus during the Ionian war and the existence of an active, pro-Athenian faction in the city, see de Ste Croix 1954: 9; Westlake 1979: 24.

¹⁴ Andrewes 2003: 467-8. J. Shear, without argument, suggested that Phrynichus may have been acting out of cowardice or, even worse, he may already have been dealing with the enemy (2011: 27).

¹⁵ For a positive appraisal of Phrynichus' decision to avoid battle, see Busolt 1893-1904: 1435 who points to lack of tactical superiority as well as numerical on the part of the Athenians.

¹⁶ 8.106.2: φοβούμενοι γὰρ τέως τὸ τῶν Πελοποννησίων ναυτικὸν διὰ τε τὰ κατὰ βραχὺ σφάλματα καὶ διὰ τὴν ἐν τῇ Σικελίᾳ ξυμφορὰν, ἀπηλλάγησαν τοῦ σφᾶς τε αὐτοὺς καταμέμψεσθαι καὶ τοὺς πολεμίους ἔτι ἀξιῶν του ἐς τὰ ναυτικά νομίζειν 'Hitherto they had been afraid of the Peloponnesian fleet, on account not only of the gradual losses they had suffered, but especially of their disaster in Sicily; but now they ceased either to reproach themselves or to consider their enemy any longer of any account in naval matters' (translated by C. Smith).

examining the exact conditions that prevailed the night on which the war council in the Athenian camp took place. Accordingly, we shall turn our investigation in this direction to see how justified Phrynichus' decision under those circumstances was.

The make-up of the Athenian fleet

The decision not to offer battle, but instead retire in safety to Samos, had grave consequences for the Athenians and their fortunes in Ionia, as we have already noted (see above page 156). It is therefore noteworthy that Thucydides at this very point affords us a warm praise of Phrynichus on the grounds of his performance on this particular, but also on other, future occasions.¹⁷ I believe that the historian deliberately made his eulogy to Phrynichus at this particular point, as an answer to the criticism that the general's performance attracted in this occasion. Was Thucydides right? To pass fair and informed judgment on Phrynichus, a necessary preliminary is to ascertain the exact size of the two naval forces. The Peloponnesians had at their disposal eighty fast ships.¹⁸ The Athenians had sixty-eight, but not all of them were fast.¹⁹ How many of the Athenian triremes were transports, and what implications would this have on the fighting capability of the Athenian force? Thucydides (8.25.1) does not break down the number, but his wording ὧν ἦσαν καὶ ὀπλιταγωγοί implies that the transports were the lesser part. Scholars have suggested a 60:40 ratio, based on the expedition to Sicily in 415 BC.²⁰ Alternatively, since Andrewes observed that the phrase at 25.1 ὧν ἦσαν καὶ ὀπλιταγωγοί does not run smoothly, we should take καὶ as a mistake for κ', twenty, which also lies well within the above-mentioned ratio.²¹ The next question is to specify what exactly a transport ship was, and how many troops it could carry. The prevailing view is that it was an otherwise normal trireme without structural modifications, manned with the *thranites* as rowers only, the men sitting on the highest of the

¹⁷ 8.27.5. On Phrynichus' intelligence, see E. F. Bloedow 1991. Andrewes remarks that Thucydides might have foreseen that his judgment of Phrynichus would not appeal to his Athenian audience (Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 5: 67).

¹⁸ Fifty-five ships under Therimenes (8.26.1) and twenty-five with Chian crews (8.17.1-3).

¹⁹ Forty-eight (transport and fast) under Phrynichus, Onomacles and Skironides (8.25.1), eight under Striombichides (8.16.1, 17.3), and twelve under Thrasyacles (8.17.3). The total number, however, could have been sixty-seven, one less, since Strombichides and Thrasyacles had only nineteen at Lade whence they blockaded Miletus.

²⁰ The composition of the Athenian fleet: Thuc. 6.43. G. Busolt, following L. Herbst *Die Rückkehr des Alkibiades* 1843 52, assumed that for the transportation of 3500 hoplites there would be needed some thirty transport ships, well beyond the logistical capability of Athens at the time. He reckoned that eighteen transport ships carried the troops from Athens to first Samos and then Miletus (1893-1904:1432 and no 1).

²¹ Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 5:59.

three rows of benches in a trireme, around sixty in number.²² The troop-carrying capacity of those vessels might have been around one hundred men.²³

We understand from Thucydides 8.25.1 that the whole expeditionary force embarked on the ships at the Piraeus, and made their way to Samos across the Aegean Sea.²⁴ Conditions must have been extremely crowded, as the 3500 men had to be crammed in just about twenty transport ships.²⁵ Even if we raise the number of transport ships to twenty-two, the one hundred troops per ship would not do. We need to raise the number to one hundred and fifty per ship to accommodate all men. Of course, it is theoretically possible that some of the hoplites may have travelled as *epibatae* on the fast ships so as to reduce the number of troops per transport-ship. But Athenian practice which laid much emphasis on speed, lightness and ramming tactics tells against a squadron of sluggish, overmanned fast ships.²⁶ It is more likely, then, that the Athenians would keep their fast ships as normal during the voyage to Samos, so as to act as protecting shield for the troop-carriers that they escorted. If these considerations are valid, then, we should have:

22 transports x ca. 148 hoplitae = 3256

26 fast ships x 10 *epibatai* = 260

Total = 516

H. van Wees' suggestion that the hoplites' slave attendants acted as rowers in the transport ships neatly deals with the problem of having to transport those extra men, although perhaps not for all 150 men would have been possible to bring their slaves with them

²² Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 4: 309, 487; H. Wallinga 1993: 169-185.

²³ Hornblower 2008: 1063-64, with earlier bibliography. J. Morrison and J. Coates reduce the number of transported troops per vessel to thirty, which is too low (1988: 226-7).

²⁴ Andrewes suggested that the one thousand allied troops were picked up on the way to Samos, but this fact does not arise from Thucydides' text. It was perhaps simpler, on logistical grounds, to assemble the entire force at the Piraeus and then allocate them to each ship. Andrewes' solution entails a longer trip and a bit of a chaos, in terms of embarkation and accommodation on board (Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 5: 59).

²⁵ Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 5: 28: 'for the short voyage (sc. to Miletus) a degree of crowding might have been tolerated.'

²⁶ The normal number of *epibatae* on an Athenian trireme was fourteen, ten *hoplitae* and four archers: Thuc. 1.49.1-2, 50.1, 7.23.4; Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.19, 2.1.22 (B. Strauss 2000: 316; van Wees 2004: 63. For the view that the standard rate of *epibatae* was fifty, see Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 5: 60. There was, of course, additional crew on board, the so-called *hyperesia*. Those included the trierarch, κυβερνήτης (steersman), κελευστής (boatswain), αὐλητής (flute player), ναυπηγός (shipbuilder), πρωιράτης (officer in command at the bow) (cf. *IG* II² 1951, 79-109). The overall number of men on board an Athenian trireme in the classical era was approximately two hundred. Wallinga (1993:169-85), however, has argued that triremes were regularly undermanned. On the composition, positioning and exact duties of this personnel, see Morrison and Coates 1988: 107-18.

at this particular expedition.²⁷ This means that on board of any of the approximately twenty plus transport ships there would have been well over 210 men, thus making the vessel, considering the reduced repulsion force, quite slow and unfit for engaging a lighter and faster warship.²⁸ As van Wees also quite plausibly points out, the rowers usually acted as light infantry on expeditions in enemy territory.²⁹ We should expect, then, the Athenian and allied light infantry, *ψιλοί*, to be around 5700 strong, which could be broken down as follows: 26 fast ships by approximately 170 rowers = 4420; 22 transport ships by approximately 60 rowers = 1320.

A new evaluation

Under these circumstances the existence of so great a number of transport ships on the Athenian side was a clear liability, a fact that Phrynichus was not slow to realise. Perhaps, it is of interest to note that a similar situation had arisen many years before, during the sea battle between the Athenians under Pericles and the Samian fleet, in the context of the Samian revolt in 440/39 B.C.³⁰ Although the Samians seemed to have enjoyed a clear superiority in sheer numbers, seventy against forty-four vessels, twenty of their ships were troop carriers. The presence of so many slow ships during an intense struggle against a renowned for their seamanship enemy must have contributed a great deal to throwing the rest of the Samian triremes into confusion, and ultimately to their defeat (Thuc. 1.116.1).³¹ Thucydides gives us the outcome in three words: *καὶ ἐνίκων Ἀθηναῖοι*. He may not have provided us with any details about the course of the battle, but has dropped a seemingly pedantic piece of information: among the Samian force, there were twenty transport ships. For the average reader this may seem irrelevant, but the perceptive one will grasp the implications. Note that the historian gives us the same detail at 8.25.1, and lets the reader draw the connection himself: transport ships are a liability rather than an asset, when it comes to engaging an enemy in open sea. Phrynichus, unlike his younger colleagues present at Miletus, would have

²⁷ Quoted in Hornblower 2008: 1064. On trireme tactics and fighting, see van Wees 2004: 206-32. The journal's anonymous referee points out that conditions which existed at the beginning of the war and which allowed the Athenian hoplites to be accompanied by their personal slaves on state salary would not have obtained in 412 B.C., and that in any case the Argives could not have brought any slaves with them because they did not belong to the hoplite class. With regard to the first argument, I may commend that due to lack of man force it is not inconceivable that some Athenians were actually accompanied by their slaves. This does not affect the main argument, of course, that the Athenian ships were exceedingly overloaded.

²⁸ The total number includes rowers, *hoplites*, *epibatai*, archers, and *hyperesia* crew.

²⁹ van Wees 2004: 63.

³⁰ On the chronology, see Gomme, Andrewes and Dover 1945-1981 vol. 1: 354-356.

³¹ See, however, Hornblower (1991: 191), who points to the scholiast to Aristophanes' *Wasps* 283. Allegedly, a certain Karystion had committed treachery and later was rewarded with Athenian citizenship. Irrespective of the credibility of this story, the two major factors that must have contributed the most to the Athenian victory were superior command and lack of cohesion in the Samian fleet due to the transport ships.

had vivid memories from that occasion, and would have drawn the necessary lessons. At the time of the Samian revolt he must have been around forty.³² Could it also be that he personally fought in that battle?

To return to 412, Phrynichus and his colleagues had to take a decision on the spot when news of the approach of the enemy reached the Athenian camp. In the event, however, a decision to fight had been reached, what would have been the solutions available to them? It is more likely than not that the transport ships lacked the spare oars necessary to convert them to fast ones. For if more men than usual had been packed on the ships for the expedition against Miletus, how would there have been any space for spare oars and other gear? But, even if we assume that the oars were available, still the transport ships would have been relatively heavy, since there would have been something like forty extra men per ship. And what about their fighting quality? Those men (especially the Argives), mainly hoplites, would have lacked the rigorous training and drilling in trireme tactics that the proper sailors had. The other option theoretically available to Phrynichus, namely to embark only the usual number of rowers on board, i.e., ca. one hundred and seventy, and the usual number of *epibatae*, and leave the rest ashore for as long as the sea-battle lasted, was too risky to be worth considering at all, for the Athenians and their allies would have had to abandon a considerable part of their infantry on a hostile shore in the event they lost the sea-battle.³³

But, criticism against Phrynichus' decision not to engage the enemy loses its force as there are further indications that the whole campaign was hastily designed and executed, and that the Athenians had not anticipated reinforcements coming from the Peloponnese. Thucydides after the battle of Miletus makes a statement which exposes the cursory character of the whole campaign:

στήσαντες δὲ τροπαῖον τὸν περιτειχισμὸν ἰσθμῶδους ὄντος τοῦ χωρίου οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι παρεσκευάζοντο, νομίζοντες, εἰ προσαγάγοιντο Μίλητον, ῥαδίως ἂν σφίσι καὶ τὰλλα προσχωρήσαι (8.25.5).

³² [Lys.] 20.10 and 12 give us the relevant piece of information, namely that Polystratos, a member of the Four Hundred who was brought to trial twice after the downfall of the oligarchic regime, was of about the same age as Phrynichus. Polystratos was about seventy at the time of the trials; cf. K. Apostolakis [*Λυσίου*] *Ἐπὶ Πολυστράτου* 2003: 37.

³³ Thucydides gives us the Argive casualties only, a few less than three hundred, that is, a little less than 20%, which is well within the figure of 14% for a defeated army. Since the Athenians and the allies won the engagement against Tissaphernes' mercenaries and horse, at a 5% rate for the winning side, their casualties should have been in the region of one hundred (P. Krentz 1985: 18; V. Hanson 1991: 101). The survivors (injured and fit for battle) then would have been around three thousand one hundred men. But even with four hundred men less to embark it was impossible for the Athenians to take the booty with them. Phrynichus' order and its financial consequences must have been equally resented among the Athenian, Argive and allied soldiers, but his rationale amply highlights the acute problem of space the Athenians had to deal with (Thuc. 8.27.4).

The Athenians set up a trophy and were making preparations for the circumvallation since the place was like an isthmus, having the impression that if they could bring over Miletus, it would so happen that the other cities would effortlessly go over to them.

T. Rood has pointed out that the adverb ῥαδίως foreshadows failure when it comes to a human undertaking. Only gods achieve their goals effortlessly. This is therefore an oblique critique on the part of the historian, who wanted to underscore at this point the various vicissitudes that can beset a military campaign, and cause things go wrong, and perhaps castigate Athenian overconfidence. We should therefore subscribe to Thucydides' assessment of Phrynichus' performance, namely that, that given the circumstances, the Athenian general took the best decision possible, and handled the whole situation with *xunesis*.³⁴

We do not know Phrynichus' attitude towards Amorges, or whether he thought Athens' decision to back him was sound.³⁵ He must have had no doubts, however, that his decision to withdraw from Miletus would seal his fate. Iasus was un-walled at the time, and Thucydides' narrative makes clear that the appearance of the Peloponnesian fleet off Iasus was totally unexpected (8.28.2). But his foremost concern after the Athenian victory was to ensure the safety of the Athenian and allied troops, and avert a military disaster, which in his view would have been irreversible, had the Athenians offered a sea-battle. He was well aware that withdrawal meant territorial loss for Athens, and that his decision would not be universally accepted. But relentless criticism, scrutiny of conduct, and, quite often, heavy penalties were realities that every Athenian general had to live with. From Thucydides' narrative, at least, it does not emerge that Phrynichus had any reasons to fear that his conduct in Ionia may cause his deposition. This unfortunate development occurred not in the immediate aftermath of the battle but considerably later, in a totally different context, amidst intrigues and clandestine stabs in the back.³⁶ His removal from office, therefore, does not seem to have come as the direct consequence of his performance as general.³⁷ What tipped the balance, then, in taking

³⁴ Rood draws attention to the existence of a dissonance between intentions and reality in Thucydides' narrative when it comes to realising ambitious projects: 'Intentions can in themselves intimate failure, especially if they are founded on an expectation or hope that success will come easily (ῥαδίως) (1999: 34 and no 30; cf. 259 and no 36); cf. 2.80.1.

³⁵ On the relations of Persia and Athens in the 420s and 410s, see S. Eddy 1973; Westlake 1977; Lewis 1977; Andrewes 1961.

³⁶ The scholiast to Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* 313, quoting Craterus, mentions that at his posthumous trial Phrynichus was found guilty of treason which he had committed when he was general on Samos. This is almost certainly a wrong inference, drawn by the scholiast who had read Craterus' copy of the verdict of Phrynichus' trial. That verdict was passed on Phrynichus on the grounds of his contemplated treachery during his mission to Sparta as an envoy of the Four Hundred. But, even if the scholiast's inference were valid, attitudes towards Phrynichus were probably not the same in the autumn of 412 as in that of 411, after the collapse of the oligarchic regime. This scholion, then, does not tell us anything about what the Athenians believed about general Phrynichus shortly after the battle.

³⁷ Peisander, during his first visit to Athens in the winter of 411, charged Phrynichus and Scironides with treason: they had allegedly betrayed Amorges and Iasus to the enemy. That caused the deposition of the two

this particular decision was the acute logistical problem his task force faced, and probably the lessons drawn from Nikias' fate in Sicily and the Samians' in the 440s, a sea-battle, to be noted, fought in nearby waters, plus Phrynichus' age and sagacity.

Phrynichus' stance on the war

Finally, could we draw any general conclusions from the events during the Miletus campaign as to Phrynichus' political convictions or his attitude towards the war? A. Ferrabino, suggested that the Athenian general was seeking a way to effect a conclusion of the war through a compromise treaty with Sparta. A decisive sea-battle would have led to either a defeat or victory and this would have jeopardised the prospect of peace.³⁸ G. Grossi refuted Ferrabino's arguments by pointing to Thucydides 8.30.2 and the Athenian domination at sea. At the end of Phrynichus' speech, Grossi argued, the Athenian general urged his colleagues to move to Samos and, using the island as hide-out, to wage the war against the Peloponnesians energetically.³⁹ H. Heftner sees in Phrynichus' command in Ionia the latter's conviction that the war could not be won for Athens, and that his approach towards the war would eventually lead to an *Abnützungskrieg*.⁴⁰ I may, personally, raise an objection to these views, namely that we can discern patterns of a far-planned policy in Phrynichus' conduct in this instance. The close examination of the prevailing conditions, and of the composition and fighting capability of the Athenian naval force at this particular instance that we have conducted strongly suggests that the Athenian general rightly took the decision to decline battle, and strategically withdraw to Samos. To be sure, it was a hard decision, but, unfortunately for Athens, imperative. We should not be rash to assume that Phrynichus took this particular course of action lightheartedly, or without weighing pros and cons thoroughly. Thucydides' verdict may then be allowed to stand. Phrynichus' was a decision, a right one we may say, dictated by ἀνάγκη, and one should be skeptical about interpreting his performance as part of a pre-conceived, far-reaching and well-planned policy.

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generals. But Thucydides' language (διέβαλλον, 'slandered') strongly indicates that Peisander's accusations were hollow, a pretext to eliminate Alcibiades' deadliest enemy at a time the renowned exile was most valuable for the oligarchic conspirators. Thuc. 8.54.3; cf. 8.49: the agenda of Peisander's mission to Athens.

³⁸ Ferrabino 1927: 347.

³⁹ Grossi 1984: 24.

⁴⁰ Heftner 2001: 49; 2005: 92.

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