CONON’S EMBASSY TO PERSIA

In his discussion of the diplomatic affairs of Athens, Sparta and Persia c. 392 B.C. Jacoby examined Xenophon’s account of the Athenian embassy, consisting of Conon, Dion, Callisthenes, Hermogenes and Callimedon, which was sent to the Persian satrap Tiribazus to oppose the efforts of Antalcidas, the Spartan envoy 1). His observations led him to dismiss the account as “probably apocryphal” 2).

Jacoby’s objections were twofold. What he termed the external difficulty was the problem of fitting in the embassy of Conon to Persia with that of Andocides to Sparta within a convincing chronological framework. The internal difficulties which he saw were that (1) none of the envoys to Persia also went to Sparta, (2) Conon’s four listed colleagues cannot be identified with certainty or probability, or are unknown otherwise, (3) there is an apparent contradiction in Xenophon’s apparent statements both that all the envoys returned home and that Conon was arrested by Tiribazus and (4) Conon appears both as a Persian admiral and an Athenian diplomat.

By now there is a general acceptance of a suitable chronological sequence which places first the conference with Tiribazus at Sardis, where the Spartans and the Athenians, represented by Conon and his colleagues, confronted each other 3). Then after those discussions ended the centre of renewed diplomatic activity was at Sparta, where the Athenians sent Andocides and his colleagues to present their case 4).

We are then left with the internal difficulties, which I propose to consider in reverse order, for my principal purpose is to comment on the aspects of the selection of personnel for Athenian embassies. As Jacoby admits, Conon could be described in 392 as a Persian admiral or an Athenian diplomat according to whether the ancient commentator was writing with a Spartan or Athenian bias, and Xenophon’s position as an Athenian exile in the Peloponnese was ambivalent. But whatever were Conon’s recent services or current obligations to Persia he was playing a role vital to the welfare of his native Athens. Not

1) Xen. Hell. 4, 8, 13.
2) F. Jacoby, FGrHist. 3b Supp. (Notes) p. 417, n. 27.
4) Andoc. 3; Jacoby op. cit. 328, Philochorus, F 149; Ryder op. cit. 27ff.

2 Rhein. Mus. f. Philol. N. F. CXVI, 1
only was that the substance of Antalcidas’ complaints to Tiri-bazus but also some of Conon’s contributions, albeit derived from Persia, are well attested 5).

The contradiction noted in Xenophon’s account that all the Athenian envoys returned home from Sardis and that Conon was arrested may be more apparent in the translation than necessarily shown by the text, for whereas the two key words most commonly would be taken to mean “they returned home” they could also mean “they departed homewards” 6), and we do not find suitably precise information on the time and place of Conon’s arrest by Tiribazus.

Of the four colleagues of Conon, Dion may be identified with the orator who was mentioned as a contemporary of Archinus at the end of the fifth century 7). A Hermagenes, brother of Callias the younger 8), himself an important diplomat and Spartan proxenos 9), is otherwise known from this period. A Callimedes of Collytus is known to have been connected with the family of Agyrrhius 10), a politician active in those years. Callisthenes, however, is completely unassociated. But even if all five envoys were otherwise unknown that would not create any insuperable difficulty in accepting the account of the composition of the embassy; for there are other well documented embassies which consisted of envoys whose names are otherwise unknown. For example, of the ten envoys sent to Olynthus in 383 the names of five men survive, Nicostratus, Phaenippus, Thrasycles, Hermippus and Athenion 11), but all are otherwise unknown. Of the five envoys sent to Byzantium in 378 12) nothing further is known about two men, Xenodocus and Alcimachus, and little is known of two more, Execestides and Orthobulus. Of the three envoys sent to Mytilene in 368/7 13) Timonothus and Aristopheithes are known only by name, and of the three envoys sent to Thrace in 356 14) only Thrason finds a chance mention elsewhere 15).

If there are larger gaps in Attic prosopography than is convenient, is there any substance in the objection made to

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6) Xen. *Hell.* 4, 8, 15.
7) Plato, Menexenus, 234b.
8) *Id.* Cratylus, 384b.
9) Xen. *Hell.* 6, 3, 4.
10) Ath. 8, 340e.
11) *I. G.* II*2* 36.
12) *I. G.* II*2* 41.
13) *I. G.* II*2* 107.
14) *I. G.* II*2* 127.
Xenophon's list of names on the grounds that none of them corresponds with the four surviving names of the ten envoys who went to Sparta in 392/1. Further is Xenophon's credibility diminished because Epierates and Phormisius, who went as envoys to Persia in 394, were not listed in 392? The answer to both questions is probably negative. For whatever remarks Demosthenes may have made about Leon and Timagoras, envoys to Persia in 367, serving together as envoys for four years, continuity of diplomatic representation was not a feature of Athenian diplomacy. For from some dozen Athenian embassies to Persia between c. 450 and c. 340, which included twenty three men who are known by name, there are only two possible instances, involving Callias and Diotimus, where one man went on more than one embassy to Persia, and neither instance is beyond dispute. Callias certainly visited Susa, possibly in 462/1, when his visit coincided with that of an Argive embassy, and again c. 449 to arrange what came to be known as the Peace of Callias. A Diotimus has been credited with an embassy to Susa in 433/2 and perhaps the same man went in 409/8 as Alcibiades' representative to the satrap Pharnabazus. Therefore the omission of Epierates in 392, despite his earlier appointment in 394, need not have been remarkable; and it must be remembered that he had been involved in a minor scandal concerning the acceptance of gifts on his embassy in 394, although the matter had been the subject of public mirth rather than of prosecution.

If there was little continuity of representation on embassies to a particular destination then we should even less expect embassies to different states to have a composition similar to each other – even over a short period. Of all the known Athenian envoys to Persia from c. 450 to c. 340 only two are known to have been despatched elsewhere; Callias was sent on the embassy to arrange the Thirty Years Peace with Sparta in 446/5, and Epierates went to negotiate with the Spartans in 392/1. If anything was remarkable about the embassies of 392 to Persia

23) Andoc. 3, 16; Diod. Sic. 12, 7. 24) Philoch. op. cit. supra n. 4.
and 392/1 to Sparta it was rather that Callias, the Spartan prono-
 xenos, who in 371 claimed to be fulfilling his third mission to
 Sparta\textsuperscript{25}), was omitted in spite of the fact that he was sufficiently
 senior to be one of the generals in 391/0\textsuperscript{26}).

On general grounds, it would be a rash historian who
would accuse Xenophon of fabrication as distinct from distor-
tion or selective presentation. Certain incidental details that the
embassy of 392 involved consultations with the Boeotians,
Argives and Corinthians lend an air of conviction. In addition
the selection of Conon was by no means improbable and the
details of his career suggest that he would have been a powerful
contender for election.

Conon’s last recorded military exploit on behalf of the Per-
sians was in the spring of 393\textsuperscript{27)}, when he raided the Pelopon-
nessian coast before his return to Athens together with Evagoras
of Cyprus in the following autumn\textsuperscript{28}). Soon after his return,
which was commemorated by the erection of a statue\textsuperscript{29}), Conon
in 393 proposed the embassy of his friend Aristophanes and
Eunomus, the guest-friend of Dionysius, to Syracuse\textsuperscript{30}); and
before long Aristophanes went as envoy to Cyprus\textsuperscript{31}), where
Conon had established such close links. Before his return Conon
had helped the Athenian revival and after his return he assumed
an important political role, enjoying considerable popularity.

His reputation for trustworthiness among the Greeks,
with whose liberty he was closely identified\textsuperscript{32}), made him an
eminently suitable envoy to send to Tiribazus. In addition he
had served well the Persian cause and the Athenians would have
had no prior reason to think that he would be exposed to any
particular risk on a mission to Persia. They did miscalculate the
reactions of Tiribazus, but equally Tiribazus miscalculated the
reactions of his King, of whose intentions the Athenians had
for the moment the sounder appraisal\textsuperscript{33}): There was an occu-
pational risk involved on embassies to Persia, for they were
frequently intercepted by third parties before their arrival, and
after arrival they ran the risk of corruption by gifts, or of being

\textsuperscript{25) Xen. Hell. 6, 3, 4.}
\textsuperscript{26) Xen. Hell. 4, 5, 13.}
\textsuperscript{27) Xen. Hell. 4, 8, 7f.}
\textsuperscript{28) Dem. 20, 71; Diod. Sic. 14, 84, 4.}
\textsuperscript{29) Dem. 20, 68–70.}
\textsuperscript{30) Lys. 19, 19.}
\textsuperscript{31) Lys. 19, 23.}
\textsuperscript{32) Isoc. 4, Paneg., 142.}
\textsuperscript{33) Xen. Hell. 4, 8, 17f.}
led around in circles\textsuperscript{34}, but Conon’s escape from Tiribazus was contrived, by design or accident, and he lived to enjoy his property in Cyprus before an honourable burial in Athens\textsuperscript{35}).

Of Conon’s embassy to Tiribazus in 392 there remains little doubt.

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UNKENNTNIS UND MISSVERSTEHEN ALS PRINZIP UND QUELLE DER KOMIK IN MENANDERS SAMIA\textsuperscript{1})


Diese Freude am Lustigen, an Situationskomik, die das Publikum zu Stürmen des Lachens mitreißt, scheint sich in der Samia im ganzen Verlauf der Handlung auszuleben: der Dichter schafft und reiht Situationen aneinander, in denen die Personen die wesentlichen Sachverhalte nicht kennen und daher ihre vorgefaßten Pläne und Absichten, sobald ausgeführt, sich als absurd erweisen und in denen sie lächerlich verkehrt reagieren, reden und handeln; mit diesem Effekt nahe verwandt ist der

\textsuperscript{34) Strabo 17, 1, 19.} \textsuperscript{35) Lys. 19, 39: 41; Paus. 1, 29, 15.}
\textsuperscript{1) Verwiesen sei auf H. Lloyd-Jones, Menander's Samia in the light of the new evidence, Yale Classical Studies, Cambridge 1972, S. 119ff. und seine Bibliographie auf S. 119, Anm. 1.}