

## Second Thoughts on Oxyrhynchus Papyri, XX, 2251.

My article "A Fragment of Aeschylus Aigyptioi?" published in *Rheinisches Museum* (69, 1953, p. 223) in which I tentatively suggested the identification of Oxyrhynchus Papyri, XX 2251 as a fragment of the *Aigyptioi* of Aeschylus has been criticised, because on the strength of parallel corruptions in MSS I altered the papyrus reading  $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\sigma\kappa\ \tau\omicron\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\text{-}\sigma\langle\varphi\rangle[\alpha\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\alpha$ . Professor Bruno Snell in *Gnomon* 25 (1953) p. 436 'The Oxyrhynchus Papyri Part 20' reconstructs the fragment: —

ἰδὲ γὰρ, ᾧ Ζ[εῦ] ἔξ[νιε], ν[ῦ]ν [δόμον  
τ]ὸν ξενοδόκον κατασκ[αφέντα

He takes *ξενοδόκον* as an adjective (my rejection of *κατασκαφ*... was based on the unnecessary assumption that it was a noun). This is clearly possible either with *δόμον* or (less probably in the context) with *πόλιν* (also suggested by Snell), and has the advantage of keeping the papyrus<sup>1</sup>). If *δόμον κατασκαφέντα* is adopted the identification as a fragment of the *Aigyptioi* is not impaired. *δόμον κατασκαφέντα* is at least as likely as not to be used as a metaphor. While there is no example in Aeschylus of *κατασκάπτω* or derivatives used literally of the fall of a building, *Cho.* 50 *κατασκαφαὶ δόμων* is used to describe the ruin of the house of Atreus caused by *δεσποτῶν θανάτοις* (which in fact meant only Agamemnon), while the physical house of Atreus is seen standing firmly in the background. (Cf. also *Ag.* 1532 *πίτνοντος οἴκου*; *Sept.* 877 *δόμους ἐλόντες πατρῶους*; *Sept.* 882 *δαμάτων ἐρειψίτοιχοι*).

In all these cases the ruin of the house referred to is caused by the death of the *δεσπότης* or *δεσπότης* in cases where a direct heir does not succeed. Orestes is in exile; in the *Septem* the race is I believe wiped out or at least Eteocles and the chorus believe that it is<sup>2</sup>).

The death of Pelasgus without heirs would be most appropriate in the *Aigyptioi*, leading on naturally to the succession of Danaos to the kingship. In a myth where many different versions have come down to us one universal element is that Danaos was king of Argos at the time of the murder.

Whether *ξενοδόκον* is taken as a noun or adjective, the close connexion of 2—5 with 6—9 seems to me, as I tried to show in my article, to entail a dead *ξενοδόκος*. Though, if it is an adjective, the death of the *ξενοδόκος* did not necessarily immediately precede this chorus, but they may conceivably be referring back to an earlier event, as the chorus of the *Choephoroi* lament the death of Agamemnon.

1) The actual metrical forms adopted by Snell are I believe less likely than the lyric iambic trimeters which were suggested to me by A. M. Dale. But supplements can obviously be produced to give this metre with Snell's reading, either  $x\ x\ \acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\ \text{or}\ \acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\mu\omicron\nu\ \cup\ x$ .

2) Professor Lloyd-Jones, in his article in *Classical Quarterly*, N. S. ix (1959) p. 88—92, with the *Epigoni* in mind suggests the possibility that *ἀτέκνους Sept.* 828 is either corrupt or does not mean childless. But apart from the question of whether this is convincing in itself, the utter destruction of the race is reiterated throughout the play, lines 691, 813, 955, 1055—6.

The case for the identification rests on the absence of suitable ξενοδοκοί in extant mythology.

Professor Lloyd-Jones commenting on my article (Appendix to Aeschylus, Loeb, Vol. II, no. 280 p. 571) says: "But for all we know many hospitable persons may have suffered destruction in lost plays of Aeschylus". This seems to me something of an overstatement. The hospitable person needs to qualify as δίκαιος and thanks to the Catalogus, summaries and occasional fragments we have some idea of the main subject matter of the great majority of the lost plays of Aeschylus, and the combination of the appeal to Zeus and wild lamentation makes it to my mind certain that the fragment touches on an important theme, not a minor episode.

I have never disputed the possibility of alternative identifications. But in the present state of our not negligible knowledge of lost plays I cannot find a likely alternative, while Pelasgos seems eminently suitable; he is outstandingly just and hospitable, deeply concerned to satisfy Ζεὺς ξένιος, left at the end of the *Supplices* on the point of embarking on war and his death would be extremely convenient for the working out of the plot.

Professor Lloyd-Jones also regards my suggestion that the Danaids may be the speakers as weakening the case for the identification. My argument was not that the Danaids may form an extra chorus (I did suggest as an alternative the possibility of an extra chorus of Argive women, when the main chorus could still be Aigyptioi) but that they may form the main chorus, while the Aigyptioi form an extra chorus making a spectacular entrance and perhaps exit too at the end of the play. Their entry as bridegrooms and triumphant exit into the palace would make an extremely effective and ominous close to the second play. I do not accept Professor Lloyd-Jones' thesis that the name of the play *Aigyptioi* indicates that the sons of Aegyptos formed the chorus (he must I think mean the main chorus). Plays are named after the main subject or subjects, present or absent, and they are named after spectacular scenes. The *Aigyptioi* could qualify under both these heads. The *Choephoroi* is an exception to the normal practice, where plural nouns represent the chorus, for it is named from the procession formed by Electra attended by the slaves who form the chorus proper. In fact she is the only choephoros in the literal sense. The chorus both describe themselves and are described by Electra as χοῶν προπομπός lines 23, 86, cf. also 149—50.