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## ARCHEDEMUS IN ARISTOPHANES' *FROGS*: OVERLOOKED ALLUSIONS

**Abstract.** This article examines allusions to the Athenian political figure Archedemus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. In *Frogs* Archedemus receives only two mentions by name (*Ran.* 416–421, 588). In the first, the chorus urges Dionysus and Xanthias to have a good, joint laugh at Archedemus. The second mention occurs in the oath of Dionysus: “May I myself, my wife, my children perish, and bleary Archedemus, all together!” The basis for my argument that Archedemus is actually ridiculed twice more in *Frogs* is his nickname mentioned in verse 588 — γλάμων. The first unnoticed allusion appears in the prologue, when Xanthias says that he couldn't have participated in the sea battle of Arginusae because he had the pinkeye. Xanthias' words seem random without any referent, and considering the other passages discussed, the most likely candidate is Archedemus. The second unnoticed allusion to Archedemus in *Frogs* is also connected with the battle of Arginusae. In the debate about prologues to tragedies, Aeschylus retells the story of King Oedipus. After Aeschylus' words “εἴτ' ἐξετύφλωσεν αὐτόν” Dionysus makes the following remark: Εὐδαίμων ἄρ' ἦν, εἰ κάσπρατήγησέν γε μετ' Ἐρασινίδου (*Ran.* 1195–1196). Oedipus, having entered into an unequal marriage with an older woman, deprived himself of sight. It should be remembered here that the chorus speaks of Archedemus as the villain par excellence of Athens. Considering his partial blindness, perhaps Dionysus' unexpected reference to Oedipus reminded the audience of another individual of questionable morals who was absent at the battle of Arginusae but managed to be the first to accuse Erasinides of embezzlement.

**Keywords:** Aristophanes, *Frogs*, ancient comedy, Athens, Peloponnesian war, sea battle, islands of Arginusae, Erasinides, Archedemus

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## АРХЕДЕМ В «ЛЯГУШКАХ» АРИСТОФАНА: НЕЗАМЕЧЕННЫЕ АЛЛЮЗИИ

**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена присутствующим в «Лягушках» Аристофана незамеченным аллюзиям на афинского политического деятеля Архедема, который дважды по имени упоминается в комедии (*Ran.* 416–421, 588). В первом контексте хор предлагает Дионису и Ксанфию вместе посмеяться над Архедемом. В другом месте Дионис называет его «Архедем-бельмо» (ἰαροῦδέημος ὁ γλάμων). В статье высказывается гипотеза, что в «Лягушках» еще два раза высмеивается тот же самый Архедем. Прилагательное γλάμων указывает на какое-то хроническое заболевание глаз. Ксанфий в прологе говорит, что он не участвовал в морском сражении, потому что у него болели глаза (*Ran.* 192). В споре о прологах к трагедиям Эсхил рассказывает историю царя Эдипа. Затем Дионис говорит, что Эдипу надо было еще быть стратегом вместе с Эрасинидом, чтобы стать счастливым (*Ran.* 1195–1196). Тема глаз и отсылка к Эрасиниду, против которого Архедем выдвигал обвинения, могут быть насмешками над Архедемом, который, как Ксанфий, не принимал участие в битве при Аргинусах.

**Ключевые слова:** Аристофан, «Лягушки», античная комедия, Афины, Пелопоннесская война, морское сражение, Аргинуские острова, Эрасинид, Архедем

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This article examines allusions to the Athenian political figure Archedemus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. Although Aristophanes only mentions him by name twice in the play, there are other, indirect references concerning his involvement in political events in 406 BC, as will be discussed in the article. According to Xenophon (*Hell.* I.7.35), Archedemus was one of the main accusers in the trial of the generals who won the naval battle of Arginusae. Since the overlooked allusions to Archedemus are directly related to these events, a general overview of the battle as presented in *Frogs* will be given below. Several months passed between the battle, in August 406 BC, and the performance of *Frogs* at the Lenaea festival early the following year (405 BC). During this time, a significant event occurred in Athens: the trial of the victorious generals. Information about the battle of Arginusae and the trial can be found only in two sources: Xenophon's *Hellenica* and Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca Historica*. The scholia on *Frogs* provide only limited information on this subject; and while the literature concerning this comedy is vast, the naval battle motif has not been deeply explored. Existing commentaries deal with it rather superficially, with the exception of J. van Leeuwen's commentary [van Leeuwen 1896]. Recent editions [Coulon, van Daele 1962; Stanford 1963, Del Corno 1985, Dover 1993, Sommerstein 1996, García López 1993], however, usually confine themselves to explaining specific names and events without integrating them into a unified historical background. L. Rademacher makes only one relevant note in his commentary: that the execution of the generals took place quite quickly, if *Frogs* mentions the unfortunate fate of Erasinides (*Ran.* 1195–1196) [Rademacher 1954: 310]. A. Sommerstein offers a brief overview of the battle and trial in the preface [Sommerstein 1996: 2–3].

The battle of Arginusae and subsequent trial of the generals have received a great deal of attention from historians, who generally focus on Xenophon and Diodorus while citing *Frogs* and scholia as sources. Since we are concerned here with these events as reflected in *Frogs*, a review of this extensive literature would be extraneous, although some works will be referenced in the text. Debra Hamel's *The Battle of Arginusae* [Hamel 2015], equipped with a voluminous annotated bibliography, does deserve special mention, as do the articles by I. E. Surikov [2024; 2025] on the trial, which not only provide a detailed overview of existing research but contain original and persuasive proposals.

The one circumstance of the naval battle attested only in *Frogs* is that the rowers on the triremes included slaves, who were later freed and granted citizenship (*Ran.* 190–191, 693–694). Since this is mentioned neither by Xenophon nor Diodorus, some researchers have questioned its authenticity [Worthington 1989], although the majority of commentators and historians accept it<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> M. J. Osborne [1983: 33–37] accepts the enfranchisement and presents the most complete discussion. B. Jordan [1975: 262], M. Ostwald [1986: 433], D. Kagan [1987: 339], and P. Cartledge [1993: 133–34] also believe that slaves were given citizenship. P. Hunt [2001] suggested that the execution of the generals was connected to the grant of freedom and citizenship to the slaves who served as oarsmen in that campaign.



γλάμων indicates some kind of eye condition, not passing conjunctivitis but a chronic disease as indicated by Lysias, who 15 years after the production of *Frogs* still refers to Archedemos as παρ' Ἀρχεδήμῳ τῷ γλάμωνι (*Lys.* 15.14). It has a doublet, γλαμυρός, used in the *Iliad* and commented on by the scholia thus: ὄθεν “καὶ Ἀρχέδημος ὁ Γλάμων” (*Ar. Ran.* 588). καὶ παροιμία “ἐν τυφλῶν πόλει γλαμυρός βασιλεύει” (*Scholia in Il.* XXIV.192a).

The etymology of this word is unknown<sup>5</sup>, nor is it possible to establish with precision the disease it describes. Judging from several parallels in the Hippocratic corpus (*Mul.* II.116, 119), it refers to an inflammation of the eyes, which gave the impression of a clouded, obscured gaze (bleary-eyed). *Etymologicum Magnum* gives the following definition: Γλαμυρόν καὶ Γλαμῶδες: Ὑγρὸν καὶ καιόμενον δακρυοῖς ὄμμα· καὶ γλαμυροῦς, ἐνυγροβίους (232.44–45). The meaning is not confined to a murkiness in the eyes, since the Latin *gramiae* / *glamiae*, derived from the same Greek root, means a purulent discharge in the corners of the eyes<sup>6</sup>.

Now let us turn to those allusions that have hitherto gone unnoticed. The first appears in the prologue. Dionysus gets into Charon's boat and calls out to Xanthias. But Charon says he does not transport slaves. If Xanthias had fought in the battle of Arginusae and had been freed, then he could have sailed<sup>7</sup>.

{XA.} Δοῦλλον οὐκ ἄγω,  
εἰ μὴ νεναυμάχηκε τὴν περὶ τῶν  
κρεῶν.

{ΞΑ.} Μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐ γὰρ ἀλλ' ἔτυχον  
ὀφθαλμῶν (190–192).

**Charon.** I'm not taking a slave, not unless he fought for his hide in the sea battle.

**Xanthias.** Actually, I couldn't be there; had the pinkeye.

Indeed, the disease of ophthalmia (inflammation of the eyes) mentioned by Xanthius was a sufficient reason not to participate in a battle. Herodotus reports that among the Spartans who defended Thermopylae, two were dismissed by

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comedy *Goats*: πανδοκεύτριαν τὴν γὰρ ἔχει ὁ γλάμων (fr. 9 K.—A.). But γλάμων in this place is W. Dindorf's correction, which was accepted by A. Meineke, Th. Kock, R. Kassel and C. Austin. S. D. Olson's text and commentary on the Eupolis fragments shows the weakness of Dindorf's argument both from the point of view of paleography and history: “Dindorf's γλάμων (“bleary-eyed”) allowed him to identify the subject of the verb as the Athenian politician Archedemos <...>. But Archedemos' *floruit* appears to be about 20 years after the most likely date of *Aiges* (cf. fr. 20 n. and the general introduction to the play), which is to say that Dindorf's desire to give the fragment a firm historical point of reference drove him into a dubious textual decision” [Olson 2018: 119].

<sup>5</sup>“The word may be Pre-Greek. From Greek comes Lat. *glamae* = *gramiae* ‘viscous humor that collects in the corners of the eyes’” [Beekes 2010: 274, s. v. γλάμων].

<sup>6</sup>“In that case, Gr. γλάμων ‘bleary-eyed’ may also be cognate, with liquid dissimilation. The latter stem was borrowed into Latin as *glamae* ‘rheum in the eye’ (Paul, *ex F.*)” [de Vaan 2018: 170, s. v. *gramiae*].

<sup>7</sup>At the beginning of the comedy, Xanthias, arguing with his master, says that if he had participated in a naval battle (scl. become a free citizen), he would have made Dionysus cry (33–34).

Leonidas because they suffered from inflammation of the eyes (ὄφθαλμιῶντες ἐς τὸ ἔσχατον, VII.229)<sup>8</sup>.

Xanthias' words seem random without any referent, and considering the other passages discussed, the most likely candidate is Archedemus. Although his nickname is derived from a different root, Aristophanes' text is not a medical treatise where precision in medical terminology would be important. Xanthias uses the verb ὄφθαλμιῶω, which indicates inflammation of the eyes from various causes (cf. Hipp. *Aph.* 6.17, Ar. fr. 129 K. — A., Xen. *Hell.* II.1.3; *Mem.* III.8.3, Pl. *Phaedr.* 255d; *Alc.* 2 139e).

Aristophanes uses such terms loosely. For example, the same disease (γλάμων) afflicted the sycophant Neocleides, whom Aristophanes ridicules in *Assemblywomen* and *Wealth*.

{GY. α} τί δ' ἦν Νεοκλείδης ὁ γλάμων  
σε λουδορῆ;

{PP.} τοῦτον μὲν εἶπον ἐς κυνὸς  
πυγὴν ὄραν (*Eccl.* 254–255).

**First Woman.** But what if Neocleides the squinter abuses you?

**Praxagora.** To him I say, go squint up a dog's butt.

*Wealth* has a description of how Neocleides was cured of his eye condition (716–725), calling him blind — not bleary-eyed — not long before this passage. It is possible Neocleides' condition deteriorated considerably in the time between the two comedies, from impaired vision in *Assemblywomen* to blindness in *Wealth*, but more likely, Aristophanes is calling him blind to enhance the effect of the joke about his ability to steal.

In *Frogs*, the very context of the joke speaks in favour of Xanthias' words being directed against Archedemus. Charon points out to Xanthias that he is a slave but could have freed himself and become a citizen of Athens. At the same time, in vv. 416–421, Archedemus is mocked for his non-Athenian background. He had not grown molars by the age of 7 — the molars being a pun on the fact that he did not become a member of a phratría, i. e. he was not a full-fledged citizen<sup>9</sup>. Such jabs about dubious origins of political figures are typical for Aristophanes. The scholia to *Frogs* note that in Eupolis' *Dyers*, Archidemus is understood to be the subject of “ἐπιχώριος δ' ἔστ' ἢ ἀπὸ ξένης χθονός;” (Eup. fr. 80 K.—A.).

The second unnoticed allusion to Archedemus in *Frogs* is also connected with the battle of Arginusae. In the debate about prologues to tragedies, Aeschylus retells the story of King Oedipus as told in Euripides' tragedy *Antigone*. After Aeschylus' words “εἶτ' ἐξετύφλωσεν αὐτόν” Dionysus makes the following remark:

<sup>8</sup> This is the only parallel where eye inflammation was the reason for not participating in a military operation.

<sup>9</sup> It is necessary to add that there could be other reasons why a father had not introduced his son in his phratría (the child could be illegitimate) [Scafuro 1994: 158–165].

{EY.} «Ἦν Οἰδίπους τὸ πρῶτον  
εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ,» —  
{AI.} Μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐ δῆτ', ἀλλὰ  
κακοδαίμων φύσει.  
Ἵντινά γε, πρὶν φῦναι μὲν, Ἀπόλλων  
ἔφη  
ἀποκτενεῖν τὸν πατέρα, πρὶν καὶ  
γεγονέναι,  
πῶς οὗτος ἦν τὸ πρῶτον εὐτυχῆς ἀνὴρ;  
{EY.} «εἴτ' ἐγένετ' αὐθις ἀθλιώτατος  
βροτῶν.»  
{AI.} Μὰ τὸν Δί' οὐ δῆτ', οὐ μὲν οὖν  
ἐπαύσατο.  
Πῶς γάρ; Ὅτε δὴ πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὸν  
γενόμενον  
χειμῶνος ὄντος ἐξέθεσαν ἐν ὀστράκῳ,  
ἵνα μὴ ἔτραφεις γένοιτο τοῦ πατρὸς  
φονεύς;  
εἴθ' ὡς Πόλυβον ἤρρησεν οἰδῶν τῷ  
πόδε·  
ἔπειτα γραῦν ἔγημεν αὐτὸς ὦν νέος  
καὶ πρὸς γε τοῦτοις τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα·  
εἴτ' ἐξετύφλωσεν αὐτόν.  
{AI.} Εὐδαίμων ἄρ' ἦν,  
εἰ κάστρατήγησέν γε μετ' Ἐρασινίδου  
(1182–1196).

**Euripides.** “At first was Oedipus a lucky man —”

**Aeschylus.** He certainly was not; he was born unfortunate, seeing that he's the one who, even before his birth, Apollo said would kill his father—before he was even conceived! So how could he be “at first a lucky man”?

**Euripides.** “— but then he became the wretchedest of mortals.”

**Aeschylus.** Certainly not “became,” by heaven, because he never stopped being that, did he? Considering that as a newborn they put him in a pot and exposed him in the dead of winter, so he wouldn't become his father's murderer when he grew up; then he wandered off on two swollen feet to Polybus; then as a young man he married an old lady; and on top of that she was his own mother; and then he blinded himself.

**Dionysus.** Yes, a lucky man, provided he also shared command with Erasinides!

It should be said here that modern commentators — unlike their predecessors F. Fritsche, F. Blades, and J. van Leeuwen — see no textual problems here. The main question is, if *casus irrealis* or *casus realis* must have been in this phrase. Dionysus' remark is a *casus realis*, although the phrase has more of a conditional modality. Therefore, R. Brunck accepted the reading of a late manuscript where the particle ἄν stood instead of ἄρ', as a result of which *casus irrealis* appeared in the sentence. Fritsche kept ἄρ' in his text and tried to explain the syntax as follows: “*beatus igitur erat (beatior futurus), siquidem etiam praetor fuisset*”, but his explanation through Latin translation didn't seem clear enough [Fritsche 1845: 363–364]. F. Paley, in his edition of *Frogs*, briefly explains the grammar in the same way: “ἦν as the Roman say *miser erat* for *fuisse*” [Paley 1877: 114]. Blaydes in his 1889 edition prints the text Εὐδαίμων γ' ἄν ἦν / εἰ κάστρατήγησέν γε μετ' Ἐρασινίδου [Blaydes 1889: 147]. Van Leeuwen changes the text radically, noting at the same time that Blaydes suggested transferring εὐδαίμων ἄρ' ἦν to Aeschylus<sup>10</sup> [van Leeuwen 1896: 179]. Van Leeuwen's text is as follows:

<sup>10</sup>Van Leeuwen doesn't clarify, whereas Blaydes proposed this correction: “1195b. Dionysi est vulgo. Aeschylō dedit Blaydes” [van Leeuwen 1896: 179]. This correction appears neither in Blaydes' edition nor in his later collection of conjectures [Blaydes 1899].

1195. εἶτ' ἐξετύφλωσεν αὐτόν. “Εὐδαίμων” ἄρ' ἦν.

1196. ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ (ad spectatores:) οὐκ ἐστρατήγησέν γε μετ' Ἐρασινίδου.

While attributing the words εὐδαίμων ἄρ' ἦν to Aeschylus seems tempting, Van Leeuwen's correction is too harsh a violation of the received text.

T. G. Tucker, in his commentary, attempts to explain the difficult Greek phrase by offering a cumbersome translation: “lit. (if he was εὐδαίμων in that case) then he was εὐδαίμων (also) if he was one of the colleagues of Erasinides” [Tucker 1906: 232].

W. B. Stanford pays attention to the grammar of this passage: “Then he was happy after all, if [to complete his perfect happiness] he also was a general with Erasinides (and consequently condemned to death with him after Arginusae)” [Stanford 1963: 173].

If we turn to existing commentaries<sup>11</sup>, all unanimously write about the bitter irony in Dionysius' words: in order to become the unhappiest, he had to become a strategist like Erasinides. Yet the commentators delve no deeper than the unfortunate fate of Arginusian generals, without explaining why Erasinides was chosen. Nor is there consensus among those who choose to examine the grammar and logical connection between Aeschylus' and Dionysius' words. Sommerstein writes: “Said ironically, the idea is that anyone who thought that Oedipus' experiences, as enumerated here, were happy ones would presumably also think that one thing still wanting to complete his felicity was for him to have been a colleague of Erasinides (and so to have been unjustly put to death)” [Sommerstein 1996: 263]. V. Coulon explains this passage in another way: “Dionysos veut dire qu'il eût mieux valu pour Oedipe subir le sort des stratèges que d'être malheureux toute sa vie” [Coulon, van Daile 1962: 141]. D. del Corno gives two ways of understanding this phrase at once: “Erasinide era uno degli strateghi condannati a morte dopo le Arginuse, per non avere raccolto i naufraghi. Trovarsi insieme a lui, giustiziato dopo una vittoria, avrebbe completato le fortune di Edipo, commenta ironicamente Dioniso; oppure, per lui sarebbe stato persino meglio fare la fine di Erasinide” [del Corno 1986: 229]. J. García López understands this phrase as a conditional period, adding that the fate of Erasinides was even sadder than the fate of Oedipus: “Edipo podría ser llamado feliz sólo si hubiera participado en esa batalla, pues la suerte de Erasinides fue peor que la suya” [García López 1993: 186].

K. J. Dover, following Blaydes and van Leeuwen, gives the only parallel to Dionysus' remark. He doesn't explain how this parallel helps to understand the text. His commentary is rather sparse: “Cf. *Pl.* 657, where Chremylos' wife, on hearing of the bathing of Wealth in the sea, exclaims ironically Νῆ Δί' εὐδαίμων

<sup>11</sup> The scholia merely remark that Erasinides was one of the executed generals, listing the others' names: μετ' Ἐρασινίδου: (Εἶς) τῶν περὶ Ἀργέννουσαν στρατηγησάντων δυστυχῶς. ἀπέθανε δὲ δημοσίᾳ, οὐτός τε καὶ οἱ ὑπομείναντες, Θράσυλλος, Περικλῆς, Λυσίας, Ἀριστοκράτης, Διομέδων, ὧς φησι Φιλόχορος.

ἄρ' ἦν / ἀνήρ γέρων ψυχροῖ θανάτῃ λούμενος. Erasinides was one of the generals put on trial after Arginusai in 406; the trouble in fact started when he was individually prosecuted by Archedemos for embezzlement. Cf. 190 n." [Dover 1993: 337].

It seems that lines 1195–1196 do not need any correction, although some researchers prefer to see here *casus irrationalis*. The most convincing explanation, which keeps *casus realis*, is the one proposed by Sommerstein. His translation is as follows: "A happy man indeed — that is *if* he also held a command together with Erasinides" [Sommerstein 1996: 131].

It can be seen that commentators are focused on solving the question of whether Oedipus was more unhappy than Erasinides, but almost no one raises the question of why the name of one of the generals appears here at all. Such a break-in by concrete reality into the illusory world of the drama at this juncture of the comedy, i.e. in the agon of Aeschylus and Euripides, is quite unusual. Dionysus constantly inserts his remarks, but they almost never go beyond the topic under discussion: he makes almost no references to characters outside of comedy. Other than this passage, there is v. 1036, where Dionysus, when talking about the armor of heroes, ridicules a certain Pantacleus, who first put on a helmet and then began to attach a crest to it. Also in v. 1047, where there is a dispute about female characters in Euripides, Aeschylus scolds the playwright for Phaedra and Stheneboia, who were not faithful to their husbands. Dionysus notices that Euripides himself has an unfaithful wife, hinting at her connection with Kephisophon. Thus, the mention of Erasinides must be justified in some way, especially since this is the only direct reference in the entire comedy to the battle of Arginusae and the trial of the generals<sup>12</sup>.

The association with Erasinides and the naval battle that arises in Dionysus can be explained through the theme of Oedipus' vision and blindness. Dionysus ironically refers to the initial quotation from Euripides' tragedy: "Ἦν Οἰδίπῳ τὸ πρῶτον εὐδαίμων ἀνήρ" (*Ran.* 1182 = Eur. *Antig.* fr. 157 Kannicht). Oedipus, having entered into an unequal marriage with an older woman, deprived himself of sight. Dionysus reacts by saying that even blind he had to take part in in the battle to complete his felicity. It should be remembered here that the chorus speaks of Archedemus as the villain par excellence. Considering his partial blindness, perhaps Dionysus' unexpected reference to Oedipus reminded the audience of another individual of questionable morals who was absent at the battle of Arginusae but managed to be the first to accuse Erasinides of embezzlement.

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<sup>12</sup> In *Frogs* Theramenes is mentioned a little earlier as a cunning and dexterous politician who was able to avoid falling and get away with it (968–970), but it cannot be said with certainty that Euripides' words point specifically to the events after the battle of Arginusae. Theramenes and Thrasybulus, as trierarchs, participated in the naval battle. After the battle, they were tasked with collecting the bodies of their dead fellow citizens, but they were unable to do so due to the outbreak of a storm, after which they shifted all the blame onto the generals and escaped punishment. Theramenes, like Archedemus, was one of the main accusers at the generals' trial.

The analysis demonstrates how the battle of Arginusae and the trial of the generals form an important background to *Frogs*, helping to interpret the text of the play more accurately. By the time *Frogs* was performed, the trial of the generals was most likely over. Erasinides and others had already been executed or sentenced, which is why Aristophanes refers to him as the most unfortunate. Although Aristophanes does not directly mention the trial, he ridicules its main accusers, Archedemus and Theramenes, indirectly. He thus avoids criticizing them outright for the charges they made against the generals. The article also brings to light two previously overlooked references to Archedemus' chronic eye disease.

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