

They begin with "O Zeus my king" which is, you know, for Persians, a tad on the weird side!

They again focus on the women, going for **PATHOS** (trying to elicit sympathy in the audience):

"There are many women tearing their veils
with their soft hands,
soaking, drenching their breasts
with tears, taking their share of pain"

Note the extensive use of sibilance (repetition of the S sound, Jack) which makes the women sound softer, vulnerable and generally more pitiful. ☹

The Chorus then say:

**"Xerxes led them away,
Xerxes destroyed them,
Xerxes wrong-headedly drove everything on in seafaring ships"**

This is a bit harsh, it's not entirely fair to pin all the blame on Xerxes, when we see in Herodotus that he was, apparently, forced into it by a god, and manipulated by Mardonius and even Artabanos favoured the plan eventually. (Start of book 7)

Then they say:

**"Ships led them away,
ships destroyed them,
ships manned by Ionians destroyed them
by lethal ramming"**

The repetition of the three blames is significant because it contrasts the two blames.

Then after a bit of summarising of the Messenger's account, the real problem is presented:

**"Not for long now will the inhabitants of Asia
abide under Persian rule,
nor pay further tribute
under compulsion to the King,
nor shall they be his subjects,
prostrating themselves on the ground; for the kingly power is destroyed."**

It will be a victory for democracy, as the Chorus predict, because the 'stroke yoke' will be 'removed' so 'people are released to talk freely' like they Greeks do.

The Queen comes back! Note the entrance 'on foot' when before it was 'in great pomp on a chariot'. The change in her entrance represents the fall of the Persian Empire, and rise of democracy, where everyone is equal.

Note the libation given to propitiate (appease) Darius; the ingredients are:

Speaking of goats, Aeschylus then uses a Homeric epithet: "sheep-rearing Asia". Still in Iran, sheep are everywhere as the most commonly found livestock. This is a tiiiiiniy bit of evidence that Aeschylus may have actually been to Persia/ heard a bit about Persia.

Darius advises the Chorus to advise Xerxes or any future Persian king to "take no expedition into Greek territory, not even if the Persian army is larger" (as it was for Salamis and every other battle in the Persian wars...).

This is because (trés important!):

"The very soil of Greece is their ally (because) it starves to death any excess population."

"For hubris flowers and produces a crop of calamity, and from it reaps a harvest of lamentation."

This draws a link between the **'flower of Persia'**, which is the army. It also links femininity and hubris- the Greeks who are manly, do not do hubris. Xerxes apparently offends **'the gods with his boasts and excessive confidence'**.

Darius' parting lines are: "Lend your souls to please a day at a time, despite the difficulties, since wealth is of no use to the dead." This is a *very* Greek ideology, and is a contradiction of the Queen, who, when she hears about Xerxes' condition, can only think about what she's wearing and materialism is central to her life, more important than the lives of her people.

This shows just how much the Persians have gone downhill since Cyrus the Great was in charge 60-ish years before, who said **"soft lands tend to breed soft men"**. This is a hugely important saying, and also shows that Cambyses was right- Xerxes' men are soft in comparison to the Greek men who live on very harsh lands.

The Queen then leaves to go to the palace to get clothes- "the misfortune which hurts me most of all to hear about is that my son is disgraced by his clothes on his body."

Your son just comes back from war... are you *really* going to give a care about what he's wearing?!?!

This does highlight Persian materialism though.

So the Queen is gone, as is Darius, the Chorus are left alone again. ANOTHER **STASIMON** IS COMING UP!

The Chorus call Darius: "all-sufficing, undamaging, invincible, (and) godlike". They clearly forgot about Marathon- that one was Darius, and was pretty damaging to the Persian army.

After singing Darius' endless praises, Xerxes turns up, and the Chorus notably does not announce his arrival. ☹️

This is the lament of the play, AKA kommos.

Xerxes opens saying: "Wretched me, I have suffered a loathsome / and totally unexpected fate!"

This is a little bit ironic, because everyone else saw it coming.

The Chorus make him feel really guilty for a while, asking where all these leaders were (although they know perfectly well where they are, having already been told by the Messenger) .