

## COSMOLOGY AND THE POLIS

This book further develops Professor Seaford's innovative work on the study of ritual and money in the developing Greek polis. It employs the concept of the chronotope, which refers to the phenomenon whereby the spatial and temporal frameworks explicit or implicit in a text have the same structure, and uncovers various such chronotopes in Homer, the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Presocratic philosophy and, in particular, the tragedies of Aeschylus. Mikhail Bakhtin's pioneering use of the chronotope was in literary analysis. This study by contrast derives the variety of chronotopes manifest in Greek texts from the variety of socially integrative practices in the developing polis – notably reciprocity, collective ritual and monetised exchange. In particular, the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus embodies the reassuring absorption of the new and threatening monetised chronotope into the traditional chronotope that arises from collective ritual with its aetiological myth. This argument includes the first ever demonstration of the profound affinities between Aeschylus and the (Presocratic) philosophy of his time.

RICHARD SEAFORD is Professor of Ancient Greek at the University of Exeter. His publications range from Homer to the New Testament, and include commentaries on Euripides' *Cyclops* (1984) and Euripides' *Bacchae* (1996), *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy and the Developing City-State* (1994), *Money and the Early Greek Mind: Homer, Philosophy, Tragedy* (2004) and *Dionysos* (2006). In 2009 he was President of the Classical Association.

# COSMOLOGY AND THE POLIS

*The Social Construction of Space and Time  
in the Tragedies of Aeschylus*

RICHARD SEAFORD



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For my daughter Artemis  
ῥεῖά τ' ἀριγνώτη πέλεται

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## Preface

The book will give an initial impression of wide-ranging complexity. Indeed, it is not a *survey*. Aeschylus himself does not arrive until Chapter 8, and those interested in the relation of Aeschylus to Presocratic philosophy may even prefer to start with Chapter 14. Those who begin at the beginning and persevere will, I hope, be rewarded by the realisation that the book forms a single coherent argument.

They may also, I hope, receive the impression that the inventors of democracy still have, despite the primitive limitations of their form of it, much to teach us. We can for instance learn that the unlimited accumulation of individual wealth is incompatible with the democratic polis, or that the democratic polis depends on communal space. In our era of growing atomisation, Aeschylean drama expresses the idea of the common good with an aesthetic power well beyond what we are capable of producing. Ancient Greek culture is what I call a culture of limit, whereas consumer capitalism is a culture of the unlimited, by which our society and planet are being destroyed.

This is my third book about the radical transformation of Greek society and culture in the archaic and classical periods. *Reciprocity and Ritual* (1994) centred around the role of ritual in the development of the polis. *Money and the Early Greek Mind* (2004) related elements of the ‘Greek miracle’ (the genesis of philosophy and tragedy) to the fact that the Greek polis was the first pervasively monetised society in history. A central theme of *Cosmology and the Polis* is the interaction of ritual and money in the only Athenian literary texts that survive from the first half-century of Athenian democracy, the tragedies of Aeschylus.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Leverhulme Trust and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for providing me with the time to write this book. I am grateful also for comments on it to David Wiles and John Wilkins, to Paul Curtis for checking the references, and to Cambridge University Press for their courteous efficiency.

## Abbreviations

Plays cited without author are by Aeschylus. The presocratic philosophers are cited in DK. Tragic fragments are cited in *TGrF*. The lyric poets are cited in *PMG*, except for Sappho and Alcaeus, who are cited in the edition of E.-M. Voigt (*Sappho et Alcaeus*, Amsterdam, 1971). Comic fragments are cited in the edition of R. Kassel and C. Austin (*Poetae Comici Graeci*, Berlin, 1983–).

Help in understanding abbreviations of ancient authors and works is to be found in the *Greek-English Lexicon* edited by Liddell and Scott, and of periodicals in *L'Année philologique*.

All dates are BC unless specified as AD.

ARV <sup>2</sup>	Beazley, J. D. (1963) <i>Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters</i> (2nd edn). Oxford University Press.
<i>Ath. pol.</i>	<i>Constitution of the Athenians</i> , attributed to Aristotle.
DK	Diels, H. and Kranz, W. (eds.) (1951) <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> (6th edn). Berlin.
FJW	Friis Johansen, H. and Whittle, E. W. (1980) <i>Aeschylus: The Suppliants</i> . Aarhus University Press.
FGrH	Jacoby, F. (ed.) (1923–58) <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Berlin and Leiden.
GIJ	Graf, F. and Iles Johnston, S. (2007) <i>Ritual Texts for the Afterlife</i> . London: Routledge.
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> .
KRS	Kirk, G. S., Raven, D. and Schofield, M. (1983). <i>The Presocratic Philosophers</i> (2nd edn). Cambridge University Press.
LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> (1981–99). Zurich: Artemis.
LSCG	Sokolowski, F. (ed.) (1969) <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i> . Paris: de Boccard.

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LSJ	Liddell, H. G., Scott, R. and Jones, H. S. <i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i> (9th edn). Oxford University Press.
PMG	Page, D. L. (ed.) (1962) <i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i> . Oxford University Press.
RE	Pauly, A., Wissowa, G. and Kroll, W. (eds.) (1893–) <i>Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . Stuttgart and Munich.
TGrF	Snell, B., Kannicht, R. and Radt, S. (eds.) (1971–2004) <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> . Göttingen.