

# THE CALENDAR OF THE YEAR 304/3 B.C. IN ATHENS

Benjamin Dean Meritt nonagenarii in memoriam

THE YEARS of the democratic restoration at Athens, after the end of the régime of Demetrios of Phaleron, were characterized by a comparative flood of legislation committed to stone-cut record, and this enthusiasm on the part of the ekklesia and its principal advisers continued unabated in the year of the archonship of Pherekles, 304/3 B.C. The result is that much is known about the calendric character of this year, by reason of the useful number of decrees that survive from it, the prescripts of which contain the data that provide the evidence. The calendar of 304/3 was fully discussed by B. D. Meritt twenty-five years ago,<sup>1</sup> and the present writer was able to add a footnote to that discussion in 1981.<sup>2</sup> Ten decrees, four of them voted at the same meeting of the assembly (the last one of the year), now constitute the material. They provide the following set of calendar “equations” between the prytany or conciliar year and the lunar or “festival” year, and nine of them are here set out (with the source references) in tabular form.

	Prytany : Day	Phyle	Festival Month and Day	Day of year
<i>IG</i> II <sup>2</sup> , 481	IV [19]	Aigeis	Pyanepsion 18	106th
482	VI [2]4	Leontis	Posideon 2[3]	170th
483	VII 29	Oineis	Gamelion 28	205th
484	VIII ?	Antigonis	[Anthesterion 9]	215th
<i>SEG</i> XXX, 69 <sup>3</sup>	IX ?	Akamantis	no data	—
<i>IG</i> II <sup>2</sup> , 485	XI [25]	Pandionis or Demetrias	[Thargelion] 2[6]	321st
486 <sup>4</sup>	XII 29	Aiantis	Skirophorion 29	354th
<i>Hesperia</i> 7, 1938, p. 297, no. 22	XII 29	Aiantis	Skirophorion 29	354th
<i>IG</i> II <sup>2</sup> , 597 (with addenda p. 662)	(XII 29)	Aiantis	Skirophorion 29	354th

To these nine may now be added the more recent evidence of a tenth document, a decree in honor of Sotimos of Kyrene, published not long ago by S. N. Koumanoudes.<sup>5</sup> This was also voted at that final meeting on Skirophorion 29, a day named the *ἔνη καὶ νέα προτέρα* of that month, which is thus shown to have been altered at a late stage by the authorities from

<sup>1</sup> *Hesperia* 33, 1964, pp. 1–15 (on 304/3 esp. pp. 7–8).

<sup>2</sup> *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honour of Charles F. Edson*, 1981, p. 365.

<sup>3</sup> No. 114 in A. G. Woodhead, *Athenian Agora*, XVI, *The Inscriptions: The Decrees* (forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> See now M. J. Osborne, *Naturalization in Athens* I, 1981, pp. 115–116, D 45; II, 1982, pp. 120–121.

<sup>5</sup> *Horos* 4, 1986, pp. 11–18.

an anticipated hollow month of 29 days to a full month of 30. The ekklesia thus ended its year with what has been described as a particularly “busy day”.<sup>6</sup>

The picture of the year that emerges from all this is quite clear and incontrovertible. It was ordinary in the festival calendar, and (this being in the period of twelve phylai) the prytany and festival calendars ran throughout in close accord. An extra day, as we have seen, was added to Skirophorion to give a total of 355 days.<sup>7</sup> There were minor inequalities, as the evidence shows, with the one calendar at times running a day ahead or a day in arrear of the other. Meritt’s assessment of prytanies and of festival months accounts for all the equations by supposing among the former a succession of four prytanies of 29 days, followed by six of 30, the final two being of 29 and 30 days respectively. As for the festival months, these apparently ran hollow and full in order, until full Anthesterion was followed by full Elaphebolion. Thereafter, regular alternation was resumed until Skirophorion was made full instead of hollow.<sup>8</sup>

If 304/3 was clearly an ordinary year, there can equally be no doubt that 303/2 was an intercalary year, with its final ekklesia as busy as its predecessor a year earlier;<sup>9</sup> and 302/1 beyond it was again ordinary. Of the years preceding 304/3, 306/5 and 305/4 were both ordinary in the festival calendar, and they followed an intercalary 307/6. The overall calendric pattern of these six years 307–301, to which Meritt devoted his 1964 article, is indeed so firmly based in the surviving material that it must be regarded as too solid to be tampered with.

What therefore are we to make of the prescript of a decree, undoubtedly of Pherekles’ year, recently published by A. P. Matthaïou.<sup>10</sup> This enactment honors a certain Medon, who had seen military service with Antigonos Monophthalmos and Demetrios Poliorketes, and whose father had on a previous occasion been designated by the Athenians *πρόξενος* and *εὐεργέτης*. It seems that Medon had recently come to Athens as an emissary from Demetrios, but the details of the decree’s contents do not concern us in the present context. What is at issue is the prescript of the decree, or at least the first five lines of it, which Matthaïou presented as follows:<sup>11</sup>

ΣΤΟΙΧ. 30

[ Ἐπὶ Φερεκλέους ὁ ἄρχων]τος, ἐπὶ τῆ[ς. . .]-  
 [.....<sup>15</sup>.....πρυ]τανείας, ἧμ’ Ἐπι-  
 [χαρίνος Δημοχάρους] Γαργήττιος ἐγρ-  
 [αμμάτευεν. . . . .<sup>8</sup> . . .]ιῶνος ὑστέρου Ε-  
 5 [.....<sup>16</sup>.....]άτει τῆς πρυταν[ε]-  
 [ίας· ἐκκλησία κυρία· τῶ]ν προέδρων κτλ.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M. B. Walbank, *The Ancient History Bulletin* 2 (3), 1988, pp. 57–59.

<sup>7</sup> On the added day see W. K. Pritchett, *Ancient Athenian Calendars on Stone*, 1963, pp. 361–363; B. D. Meritt, *Ἄρχ’ Εφ* 1968, pp. 77–80.

<sup>8</sup> For the year see also W. K. Pritchett and O. Neugebauer, *Calendars of Athens*, 1947, p. 79; B. D. Meritt, *Historia* 26, 1977, p. 171.

<sup>9</sup> Osborne (footnote 4 above), II, p. 137; for the year, Meritt (footnote 1 above), pp. 4–7.

<sup>10</sup> *Horos* 4, 1986, pp. 19–23 (in Greek, with English summary p. 23), with photograph pl. 2.

<sup>11</sup> I have altered the punctuation and inserted numerals above the dots for ease of study. In line 5 Matthaïou printed too many dots.

The name of the *γραμματεὺς* puts the year of the decree beyond all doubt, and the length of line of the text is established not only by the necessary supplements of lines 2–3 and 5–6 but also by material lower down in the body of the enactment. A *vacat* of one letter must therefore be supposed in line 1.<sup>12</sup>

What is striking, given that the year must be 304/3, is the appearance of the word *ὑστέρον* in the fourth line after the name of the festival month. In his English summary Matthaïou states that this shows “clearly that an intercalary month is to be understood here; the year 304/3 is, accordingly, an intercalary one.” He makes no attempt to re-evaluate the other evidence in order to contrive that this may be so, but in his fuller Greek commentary he notes that Hekatombaion, Metageitnion, and Anthesterion can be supplied to fill the lacuna. So indeed they can, and he prefers the last named as coming later in the year than the other two, which were, after all, the first two months of the festival calendar.

While there is evidence for the use of all these three months for intercalary purposes, they were very rarely so used. The month normally repeated in an intercalary year in the Athenian calendar was Posideon, with the occasional though much rarer use of Gamelion.<sup>13</sup> Although Matthaïou has a note giving references to work on the calendar of 304/3, he says nothing of this wider issue. If the year was intercalary, as he asserts, it was unusually so. In the ordinary course of events we would expect Posideon II, or, if the evidence pointed that way, we would accept Gamelion II. But neither can be restored here.

Moreover, if by some epigraphical legerdemain all the prescripts of 304/3 could be reinterpreted so as to make the year intercalary, it would be necessary to use the same legerdemain to reinterpret 303/2 as ordinary: for the Athenian calendar did not admit of two intercalary years in succession. But the evidence for 303/2 as intercalary is even more formidable in persuasive quantity than that for 304/3 as ordinary. There is no way in which it can be reshaped by scholarly ingenuity to conform with the revision of the accepted pattern for these years allegedly imposed by the decree in honor of Medon.

Fortunately there is no need even to make the attempt. The word *ὑστέρος* in such a context tells us, when all is said and done, no more than that a name already used (in this case the name of a month) has been repeated. It does not of itself constitute irrefutable evidence that the month was an extra, intercalary one. There is the interesting comparable instance of the archon of 296/5, Nikias, designated in decrees of the later part of his year as Nikias *ὑστέρος*. In that case it is a question of the same man fulfilling his office under a new régime which had restarted the year with a complete set of truncated months.<sup>14</sup> In the present text we are faced with the re-use of an earlier month-name at a later stage of the year—a year which in all other respects continued on its way as an ordinary year, along the lines already described.

How did this come about? The answer lies, clearly enough, in the story recounted by Plutarch in chapter 26 of his *Life of Demetrios*. The king had enjoyed a busy and successful

<sup>12</sup> For such “irrational vacant spaces” cf. Sterling Dow, *HSCP* 67, 1963, pp. 62–66; M. J. Osborne, *ZPE* 10, 1973, pp. 264–265.

<sup>13</sup> See A. G. Woodhead, *The Study of Greek Inscriptions*, 2nd ed., 1981, pp. 119 and 141, note 26, with references there.

<sup>14</sup> See most recently M. J. Osborne, *ZPE* 58, 1985, pp. 275–282, and *SEG* XXXV, 84.

campaign and well knew that he would receive a tumultuous welcome when he reached Athens, as he shortly proposed to do.<sup>15</sup> He wrote, ahead of his arrival, that he wished to be initiated into all the stages of the Eleusinian Mysteries, from the Lesser to the Greater, and he expected the Athenians to make this possible for him. Of these, the Lesser Mysteries took place in the month Anthesterion, and the Greater in Boedromion.<sup>16</sup> Both these months in Pherekles' year had already passed; but protests on the part of the religious purists were brushed aside. Stratokles, ever prepared to move a proposition in the ekklesia in favor and flattery of Demetrios or a member of his entourage,<sup>17</sup> came up with a resolution that the month Mounichion be called and regarded as Anthesterion; and Demetrios was duly initiated at the Lesser Mysteries. After that, the name was again changed, and Mounichion became Boedromion, so that Demetrios could proceed to the final ceremony. It was not surprising that the poet Philippides lampooned Stratokles as the man who abridged a whole year into a single month.

For official purposes the month so re-named would have to appear as Anthesterion II, and later (if the evidence were to emerge) we might find for this year a decree dated as of Boedromion II. Matthaiou's choice of Anthesterion for his lacuna, although he did not suspect the reason for it, turns out to have been the correct one. Mounichion, temporarily a second Anthesterion, was the tenth month of the festival year, and the whole prescript of this decree may be fully restored, conformably with the already known pattern of 304/3, to provide a regular equation Pryt. X 9 = Mounichion/Anthesterion II 9 = 275th day. The phyle in prytany will have been either Erechtheis or Kekropis. The text will be as follows:

## ΣΤΟΙΧ. 30

[Ἐπὶ Φερεκλέους ἢ ἄρχοντος, ἐπὶ τῆ[s Ἐρ]  
 Κε]  
 [εχθρίδος δεκάτης πρυτανείας ἢ Ἐπι  
 [κροπίδος  
 [χαρίνος Δημοχάρους] Γαργήτιος ἐργ  
 [αμμάτευεν Ἀνθεστηριῶνος ὑστέρου ἐ  
 5 [νάτει ἰσταμένου, ἐν]άτει τῆς πρυταν[ε]  
 [ίας· κτλ.]

Thus the new evidence, evaluated with reference to Plutarch's story, also serves to bear out that story's historicity. We now have epigraphical testimony to give vivid witness both to Stratokles' adulation and to the popular readiness (of which there is abundant evidence in other directions) to give Demetrios everything, and more, that he asked for. The interaction of inscriptional and literary material in the service of historical study could hardly be more effectively demonstrated.

<sup>15</sup> For the events of this year see Woodhead (footnote 2 above), pp. 363–365.

<sup>16</sup> The normal dates of these celebrations are usefully discussed by J. D. Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar of the Athenian Year*, 1975, pp. 120 and 65 respectively.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Osborne (footnote 4 above) II, 1982, pp. 120–121 with note 495, with references to extant decrees proposed by Stratokles.

*Postscript:* The decree, and Plutarch's story, also indicate the current state of Athenian euphoria, attested in the preceding month Elaphebolion by the passage of *SEG XXX*, 69. The hypertension and excitement that contributed to popular compliance with Demetrios' staggering request are reflected in the terms of that decree and should be borne in mind when these are interpreted. The armchair objectivity of the scholar's study is not enough: one must enter into the emotions of the occasion.

In this light it is not inapposite to consider the three suggestions put forward in *SEG XXXII*, 1705, as amendments to the text of *XXX*, 69. In line 11 it is proposed to restore *τοῖς* [*βασιλεῦσιν* for *τοῖς* [*Ἑλλησι πᾶσιν*, in lines 19–20 *μερίξεσθαι* for *πορίξεσθαι*, and in line 23 *ἀγ[αθῶν]* for *ἀγ[ώνων]*. The first of these is quickly to be discounted, for it is too short by one letter for the space available in the lacuna. The second is a small matter, and one of personal option: "allocation" or "provision". It is fair to observe, however, that *μερίσαι* (active) occurs in the previous line, where the Military Treasurer is required to allocate funds (from his present allotment) for the sacrifice and dedication decreed as items for immediate action. His subsequent instruction is to provide for future annual celebrations costing 200 drachmas. The difference of texture between present allocation and future provision, as well as a (perhaps exaggerated) sensitivity to *variatio*, led to the endorsement in the text of the verb that had already commended itself to Meritt,<sup>18</sup> but one may choose as one pleases.

It is for the final suggestion that account must be appositely taken of the temper of the times. The sense of freedom gained by united struggle and "salvation" is very prevalent in the texts of these years. *Ἐλευθερία*, *σωτηρία*, *ξυναγωνίζεσθαι* are recurrent themes which enhance one's appreciation of the morale and state of mind of the Athenians.<sup>19</sup> *Ἀγ[αθῶν]*, mere "good things", may well seem jejune against such a background: the heightened color of *ἀγ[ώνων]* does much to reflect it, and is in this context fully worthy of retention. The republication of this inscription as *Agora XVI*, no. 114 in consequence will preserve the text of the edition reproduced as *SEG XXX*, 69.

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<sup>18</sup> *Hesperia* 16, 1947, p. 153, no. 46.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Meritt, *Hesperia* 10, 1941, pp. 55–56, no. 19 (*SEG XXXIII*, 96); *IG* II<sup>2</sup>, 466 (*SEG XXIV*, 110), 467 (*SEG XXXIV*, 73), 469, 471, 498 (*SEG XXI*, 338). For *σωτηρία* gained as the result of struggle cf. also *SEG XIV*, 58; *IG* II<sup>2</sup>, 479 (*SEG XXXIII*, 93).