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IG XIV 1184 AND THE EPHEBIC SERVICE OF MENANDER

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It became fashionable during the Empire for wealthy Romans to erect in their gardens or libraries herms and busts of famous Greeks, with the name of and often a few words about the subject inscribed upon the base. Included in this class of sculpture, with members of such groups as the Seven Sages and the Ten Orators, were some statues of the comic poet Menander. My aim here is to present the most likely solution to a puzzle resulting from a mistake made in the inscription which once appeared beneath one of these busts of Menander. With the solution comes additional information about the life-dates of Menander, as well as about the Athenian *ephebeia* in 322 B.C. and supporting evidence for the regnal year dates of Ptolemy I, Soter.

The inscription in question, IG XIV 1184, has been lost. Its text survives in four copies, however, and the accepted reading is based upon two of the four.¹ The inscription states: “Menander, son of Diopeithes of Cephissia, was born in the archonship of Sosigenes [342/1] and died aged fifty-two in that of Philippos [292/1] in the 32nd year of the reign of Ptolemy Soter”.

Meanwhile, an anonymous Alexandrian source for the life of Menander records that the poet directed his first play while still an ephebe in the archonship of Diocles (ἐδίδαξε δὲ πρῶτον ἔφηβος ὄν ἐπὶ Διοκλέους ἄρχοντος).² It also states that he died in Athens having lived fifty-two years (τελευτῶ δὲ ἐν Ἀθήναις ἑτῶν ὑπάρχων νβ').³ The tradition that Menander died aged fifty-two is echoed by Apollodorus, apud Gellius (17.4).

It should be clear that there are two problems with the evidence thus far. First of all, the account of Menander's life-span is mistaken, for if he were indeed born in 342/1 and died in 292/1, he would have lived into his fifty-first year only and not his fifty-second.⁴ One of the facts in the inscription must be incorrect. The second problem is that the archon year of Menander's *ephebeia* as given by the anonymous source must also be incorrect. The nearest archons of the name Diocles fall in the years 409/8 and 286/5.

* I am grateful to Ronald Stroud, Robin Lane Fox and Werner Eck for their helpful advice and critique concerning the presentation of this paper.

¹ Kaibel; Hülsen, *MDAI(R)* 16 (1901), 166.

² J. M. Edmonds, *The Fragments of Attic Comedy* Vol. IIIb (Leiden, 1961), 533 = Anon.; Kaibel, *CGF* I, 9, line 71. Many of the sources cited can be found in Edmonds, 533. It should be made clear that this archon name is presumed to have originated from a didaskalic catalogue and not from an ephebic inscription – the latter's archon name would have been that under whom Menander and his peers were enrolled; v. F. Mitchel, ‘The Cadet Colonels of the Ephebic Corps’, *TAPhA* 92 (1961), 348, n. 3; K. Clinton, ‘The Ephebes of Kekropis of 333/2 at Eleusis’, *AE* 127 (1988) [1991], 29.

³ νβ' is Bekker's emendation, from νζ', based on IG XIV 1184 and Apollodorus; cf. Kaibel, 9, note to line 73.

⁴ The idiom used here is not that of the English “so-and-so years old”, but rather each year *or portion of year* lived is counted as one, so the day one was born one “entered one's first year”.

More evidence comes into play. Under the fourth year of the 114th Olympiad (321/0), the Hieronymus version of Eusebius records that Menander won a victory with his first play, the *Orge*.⁵ The Armenian version places the event in the year 322/1. On the basis of the Armenian chronicle, Clinton long ago corrected the anonymous fragment's archon name from Diocles to Philocles, the archon in 322/1.⁶ Since then, a publication of part of the Parian Marble has revealed beyond doubt that Menander's first victory did not occur until 316/5.⁷ Building upon Wilhelm's suggestions, Capps unravelled the manuscript error, explaining that a scribe had conflated two separate events in his source – the date of Menander's first play, name unstated, and the name of his first victory, date unstated.⁸ Capps found a parallel for the original format in the chronicle's accounts of Sophocles, the only other poet for whom Eusebius recorded both the date of his first play (Ol. 77.2) and that of his first victory (Ol. 78.1). Combining the surviving reading of the Hieronymus chronicle with the Armenian version, Capps restored the first Syncellus notice for Menander (Ol. 114.4) as πρῶτον ἐδίδαξε and the second (Ol. 116.2 = 316/5) as Μένανδρος (κωμικὸς πρῶτον, δρᾶμα διδάξας Ὀργήν, ἐνίκᾳ, καὶ Μενέδημος) καὶ Σπεύσιππος οἱ φιλόσοφοι ἐγνωρίζοντο. The net result of Capps' argument is that Menander seems to have authored a play performed ca. 322, but which was not the *Orge* and which did not win the competition.

When Clinton proposed his emendation, the archon date of Philippus was not yet known. Although by 1906 this date could still not be fixed, Clark could not accept the possibility of its falling later than 292/1.⁹ He did accept that Menander had lived into his fifty-second year. To reconcile these facts, Clark proposed an ingenious and, we shall see, mistaken solution. Strabo (14.1.18 [C 638]) tells us that the philosopher Epicurus grew up in Samos and in Teos and that he was an epebe in Athens at the same time as the comic poet Menander (γενέσθαι δ' αὐτῷ συνέφηβον Μένανδρον τὸν κωμικόν). Apollodorus, apud Diogenes Laertius (10.14), records quite specifically that Epicurus was born in the third year of the 109th Olympiad, during the archonship of Sosigenes (342/1), on the seventh of the month of Gamelion. Clark therefore supposed two things about the source or inscriber of *IG XIV 1184*: first of all, that he was familiar with the account of the year of Epicurus' birth and the tradition that he and Menander had been epebes together, and secondly, that he had written in the days when the *ephebeia* was only a one year programme and did not realize that at the time of Menander it had been two. According to Clark's theory, the inscriber did not have accurate knowledge of the life of Menander but, based on his knowledge of the life of Epicurus, assumed that the two were born in the same year. To reconcile the inscription and attempt to find an archon date for Philippus, Clark instead

⁵ A. Schoene, *Eusebii Chronicorum Canonum*, Vol. II (Berlin, 1866), 116–117.

⁶ H. F. Clinton, *Fasti Hellenici*, Vol. II (Oxford, 1834), 181.

⁷ “ἐνίκᾳ δὲ καὶ Μένανδρος ὁ κωμοιδοποιὸς Ἀθήνησιν τότε πρῶτον”: A. Wilhelm, ‘Parische Marmor-chronik’, *MDAI(A)* 22 (1897), 200; F. Jacoby, *Das marmor Parium* (Berlin, 1904), 23.

⁸ E. Capps, ‘Chronological Studies in the Greek Tragic and Comic Poets’, *AJPh* 21 (1900), 60–61.

⁹ W. R. Clark, ‘Menander: A study of the chronology of his life’, *CP* 1 (1906), 313–328. Clark's belief was correctly based upon the archon list provided by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in *Deinarchus* 9.

suggested that Menander had actually been born a year prior to Epicurus (343/2) and that they could be described as “fellow ephebes” because Epicurus’ first ephebic year was Menander’s second. In thus pushing Menander’s birth-year backwards, Clark addressed the anonymous fragment by altering Clinton’s correction of “Philocles” to read “Anticles”, who was archon in 325/4, and suggested that the first play referred to was performed in 325/4 – the first year of Menander’s ephebate.

This theory put the archonship of Philippus at the year 292/1. When Dinsmoor produced his study of the archon dates of Hellenistic Athens, more evidence for Philippus’ archonship was at hand.¹⁰ The list of archons given by Dionysius of Halicarnassus was one archon too short for the time period that it covered. The problem was resolved by Dinsmoor with the realization that two decrees bearing Olympiodorus as archon showed different *anagraphais*.¹¹ Olympiodorus, the archon immediately preceding Philippus, had taken advantage of the oligarchy of Demetrius Poliorcetes to hold illegally the archonship for two consecutive years (294/3 and 293/2). Because this left 292/1 as the only possibility for Philippus, the year for which Clark had argued, Dinsmoor also accepted and repeated Clark’s reasoning about Menander.

On the basis of the momentum which Clark’s theory had thereby achieved, Lewis also accepted it, but was rightly worried that it failed to account adequately for the Eusebius entries of a play performed in 322/1 or 321/0.¹² Lewis wrote “we still have to account for Eusebius, and it seems most likely that he is referring to a Lenaian victory”. He then provided a time table which gave 325/4 as the date of Menander’s first production, 322/1 or 321/0 as the date of a first Lenaean victory, and 316/5 as the date of his first victory in the Dionysia. Curiously enough, Lewis abandoned Clark’s suggestion that Menander’s birth fell in 343/2, reverting to the original, but was unconcerned that this had been the basis of Clark’s dating.

I propose the following solution to the problem. When Clark was writing, Aristotle’s *Athenaion Politeia* had only been in currency for two decades, and its intricacies were not yet fully understood. In formulating his argument, Clark (followed by Dinsmoor) accepted the wrong side of a debate (then heated but by now largely resolved) concerning the reckoning of age in Athenian idiom. In his calculation of Menander’s age, both upon entering the *ephebeia* and upon death, he had assumed that all sources followed the Greek idiom of life-years. To be in his fifty-second year meant not that Menander was fifty-two, but that he was fifty-one and something: he had entered into his fifty-second year. Likewise, Clark supposed that ephebes performed their service at the age of 17+ to 19+, rather than

¹⁰ W. B. Dinsmoor, *The Archons of Athens in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), 41–42.

¹¹ IG II² 649 and 389, both heavily restored; the former shows Thras(ycles of Thri)a (Oineis, VIII) as *anagraphheus*; the latter shows Epicurus of Rhamnous (Aiantis, XI) and states that [Olympi]odorus was then serving a second year as archon.

¹² D. M. Lewis, ‘Appendix to Chapter II’, apud Pickard–Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*² (Oxford, 1988), 119. Clark, ‘Menander’, 321, dealt with it by supposing that the Hieronymus account (321/0) had been dislocated by an Olympiad. It was the late Professor Lewis who kindly brought his Appendix to my attention.

18+ to 20+.¹³ This is why he could not understand how Menander could still have been an ephebe at the age of twenty (and “in his twenty-first year”, as Clinton had pointed out).

Today it is generally accepted that there were two ways to count years. The expression to be in one’s such and such year does in fact mean what Clark thought it did, just as when the *Ath. Pol.* (53.4) says that the *diaitetai* were those οἷς ἂν ἐξηκοστὸν ἔτος ᾗ, it means: “those in the official year in which their sixtieth birthday fell”. But the formula, to be over such and such a year, or to have achieved such and such a year, means just that. The supervisors of boys’ choruses had to be over forty years of age: ὑπὲρ τετταράκοντα ἔτη γεγονότες (*Ath. Pol.* 56.3). The *Ath. Pol.* (42.1) therefore makes it clear that ephebes began service after the beginning of the first archon year following their 18th birthday.¹⁴ In fact, for there to have been 42 age groups from the years 18 to 59 inclusive, and for the *Ath. Pol.* to preserve internal consistency, ephebes must have begun their service after turning 18 years-old, not having entered into their 18th year (i.e. being 17 years old). Likewise, they would complete their service not long after the beginning of the archon year following their 20th birthday, two years later – during their “twenty-first year”.

When this is understood, Clark’s arguments become impossible. Even if born in 343/2, Menander could not have been an ephebe until 324/3. He could therefore not have entered a play while an ephebe in the archonship of Anticles. Without reason to move it, Menander’s birth year must revert to the more probable year of 342/1, the same year as that of Epicurus and the year recorded by our inscription. Clinton’s earlier emendation of Philocles must be restored and we must accept the untangled Armenian chronicle which records a date of Menander’s first play in 322/1. We may dispose of the Lenaeon hypothesis which in any event, as Clark pointed out, would have been unprecedented in Eusebius.¹⁵ The first year of Menander’s (and Epicurus’) *ephebeia*, then, was 323/2, and the second was the archonship of Philocles, 322/1, when he directed his first play, not the *Orge*, but the some other play.

A guess has already been made as to the identity of this first play. In 1902, Bethe suggested that the Terence play *Heauton Timorumenos* provides clues to its Menander antecedent of the same name.¹⁶ Line 117 refers to the “king” in Asia; Bethe felt that this king could only be Alexander. In line 194 we find *patriam incolumem* – “homeland, safe and sound”, which would be a strained description of Athens following the “Lamian War”. Bethe therefore argued that the play must have been composed by Menander prior to Alexander’s death in 323, but, given the Eusebius, conceded that it was not performed until 322/1. Clark adopted Bethe’s ideas because they could be seen to support his early dating; he concluded that this was the play which Menander directed in 325/4. After all, says Clark,

¹³ Clark, ‘Menander’, 318–319, n. 1; Clark was aware of and cited sources for the debate about the age-year of ephebic inscription but did not draw attention to the fact that it is this issue upon which his entire argument hinges.

¹⁴ P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Athenaiion Politeia* (Oxford, 1981), 498; M. Golden, ‘Demosthenes and the Age of Majority at Athens’, *Phoenix* 33 (1979), 25–38, esp. 30–32; contra R. Sealey, ‘On coming of age in Athens’, *CR* 71, n.s. 7 (1957), 195–7.

¹⁵ Clark, ‘Menander’, 316.

¹⁶ E. Bethe, ‘Die Zeit des Heauton Timorumenos und des Kolax Menanders’, *Hermes* 37 (1902), 278–282.

“we cannot suppose for a moment that Menander postponed the production of his play for two years out of a desire to polish it off carefully”¹⁷.

Bethe’s theory is by no means conclusive. Perhaps, for instance, the question is merely one of dramatic date. If Bethe was correct however, we could still answer Clark’s challenge and provide a reason for Menander to have waited at least two years between writing and producing the play. Menander was busy becoming an ephebe. Let us say he wrote it in 324/3. He could not have directed it in the following year because it was his first year in the *ephebeia*, and he was therefore not allowed to participate in civic functions. The only exceptions granted, as the *Ath. Pol.* clearly states (42.5), were in cases of inherited property, inherited priesthood, or the marriage of an heiress. Why, then, was Menander able to direct a play in his second year as an ephebe? I suggest that because the “Lamian War” had already lasted a year, there were probably few left in Athens who had written new plays or were present to direct them. Menander’s play was available, and the needs of the Dionysia demanded that he be given permission to direct it, even though an ephebe. Also, ephebes traditionally spent their second year serving in garrisons along the frontier. When Athens went to war, three of her ten tribal regiments had been sent to reinforce the frontier (Diod. 18.10.2, 11.3). Second year ephebes in the forts became superfluous. MacDowell has deduced from two speeches of Demosthenes (21.15 and 39.16–17) that chorus members could be exempt from military duty.¹⁸ It is doubtful that this exemption would ordinarily have applied to ephebic poets, but these were not ordinary times.

It happens that Menander is not the only comic poet to have produced a play while he was an ephebe. *IG II² 2323a*, a didaskalic catalogue of the Dionysia dramatic contests, records under the year 312 a poet Ameinias who received third place for his comedy *Apoleipouse* while an ephebe. It serves as a parallel to Menander’s exemption and might have been inspired by it.

If my calculations about Menander are correct, the *ephebeia* must have continued to operate throughout the “Lamian War”. This should not come as a surprise. Thucydides (2.13) tells us that the *neotatoi* were not required to campaign abroad (although they could perhaps volunteer).¹⁹ There seem to have been some exceptions to this policy, such as Iphicrates’ march to the relief of Sparta in 369 (Diod. 15.63.2) and perhaps again against Thebes in 366.²⁰ But, as the scholiast to Aeschines 1.18 tells us, “they [Athenian citizens] went to war after reaching the age of twenty”. The *ephebeia* of Menander and Epicurus, however, provides the only evidence that ephebes did not serve outside Attica in major wars.

¹⁷ Clark, ‘Menander’, 322.

¹⁸ D. MacDowell, ‘Athenian Laws about Choruses’, *SYMPOSION* (Valencia, 1982 [1985]), 70–72.

¹⁹ Voluntary service abroad: in *Av.* (1360–69), the young bird, having just come of age, is invited to go fight on the Thracian coast; v. H. D. Westlake, ‘Overseas service for the Father-Beater (Birds 1360–71)’, *CR* 68, n.s. 4 (1954), 90–94.

²⁰ Xen. *Hell.* 7.4.1; Diod. 15.76.1; Aeschin. 3.8; Dem. 18.99.

This theory also means that if the *ephebeia* was indeed discontinued during Phocion's oligarchy, as Mitchel has supposed,²¹ Menander and Epicurus were among the final ephebic year group to complete the two-year Lycurgan programme. It means that they had completed their first-year garrison of the Peiraeus only days before the Macedonian troops under Menyllus marched into the harbour and garrisoned Munychia, and that the *ephebeia* was probably allowed to continue at least until the City Dionysia of 321, probably until the end of the archon year. Other evidence also suggests that the democratic framework of government remained in place for a time after the agreement with Antipater, not being replaced by an oligarchic one until the change of archons in the summer of 321.²²

But what of Philippus? The charm of Clark's theory was that it served to explain the error in *IG XIV 1184*, and after all it had correctly dated the archon year to 292/1. One possibility, of course, is that Menander died in the year 291/0, in his fifty second year, but that the source for our inscription accidentally recorded Philippus instead of Charinus. It would be irony indeed if our only epigraphic evidence for the archonship of Philippus were the result of mistaken chronology!

Although they often disagree by a year, both the Armenian Eusebius and Hieronymus state that Menander died in 292/1. The Armenian version places the death in the 32nd year of Ptolemy's reign and begins that reign in 323/2, while Hieronymus counts the regnal years from 324/3 but places the death in Ptolemy's 33rd year. It is clear that the Armenian version accords with *IG XIV 1184*, but it would be helpful to identify the year from which Ptolemy I counted his regnal years. In addition to the disagreement in Eusebius, we have the account of the Parian Marble, which states clearly that Ptolemy I began his reign at the end of the Athenian archon year of 324/3 (B8) vs. 323/2 of Eusebius.²³ While this appears to match the date in Hieronymus, it need not contradict the Armenian version because the Marble records the occasion as a distinct event, while the chronicle of Eusebius must equate the span of Ptolemaic regnal years with Olympic years and other calendars, so it would make far more sense to count 323/2 as Ptolemy's first year.²⁴

Until recently, no firm theory had been put forward to establish once and for all the date and time of year at which Ptolemy I began his satrapy.²⁵ Samuel claims to have worked this out and places it at the time of Alexander's death, but in doing so bases his arguments upon the very inscription in question (*IG XIV 1184*), without mention of the obvious error involved.²⁶ Otherwise, it could have been: on Alexander's death (ca. June 11th, 323); whenever Ptolemy arrived in Egypt (sources vary from immediately after Alexander's death

²¹ F. W. Mitchel, 'Derkylos of Hagnous and the date of *I.G.*, II², 1187', *Hesperia* 33 (1964), 346–348, but cf. 349.

²² J. M. Williams, *Athens without Democracy. The Oligarchy of Phocion and the tyranny of Demetrius of Phalerum (322–307) B.C.* (Diss., Yale University, 1982), 117–118.

²³ Jacoby, *Marmor Parium*, 195; Dinsmoor, *Archons*, 42.

²⁴ The divergence of Porphyry, *FGrH* 260 2, (2), is not so easily explained; cf. *POxy.* 12.5.33–6 = *FGrH* 255.9.

²⁵ This equates to the beginning of Ptolemy's regnal years, reckoned retroactively after his coronation in 305/4; see A. Samuel, *Ptolemaic Chronology* (Munich, 1962), 4–11.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 15–19.

to “a year later”); at the beginning of the Egyptian year (which then fell on November 12th);²⁷ or at the beginning of the Macedonian year (in the autumn).

Recently, however, Erhard Grzybek has provided a solution based upon his interpretation of the hieroglyphics of the Pithom Stele.²⁸ Grzybek argues that the god Atoum is to be identified as the deified Ptolemy I, and that the dates of the visits of Ptolemy II to the shrine at Pithom are highly significant. Grzybek’s Text A records a visit by Ptolemy II to Pithom on 7 Hathyr in the sixth year of his reign (January 6, 279) to celebrate the 25th anniversary, by the Macedonian calendar, of Ptolemy I’s accession to the throne. Text B records that on 30 Hathyr in the sixteenth year of his reign (January 27, 269), Ptolemy II inaugurated a festival commemorating the death of Ptolemy I. Grzybek demonstrates that when these Egyptian dates are translated into the Macedonian calendar (taking intercalation into account), they equate to 28 Daisios, in 304, and 10 Dystros, in 269. The 28th of Daisios falls exactly on the Macedonian anniversary of Alexander’s death and provides compelling evidence that when Ptolemy I ascended to the crown in 304, it was on the 19th anniversary of the beginning of his satrapy.²⁹ (The tenth of Dystros corresponds to the date of Ptolemy I’s death and the celebration of the *Basileia*.)³⁰ If Grzybek’s interpretation of the Macedonian calendar is correct, June 10, 323, clearly emerges as the beginning of Ptolemaic regnal reckoning. This puts the 32nd regnal year of Ptolemy, calculated by the Macedonian calendar, at March 2, 292, to February 19, 291³¹ – overlapping with the archonship of Philippus by about eight months, but with Charinus not at all.

I have detailed my reasons for accepting the archonship of Sosigenes as the correct year for Menander’s birth. For the year of Menander’s death given by the inscription to have been mistaken, both the archon year and the Ptolemaic regnal year recorded must have been incorrect. It is my view, therefore, that we should accept 292/1 as the year of Menander’s death and assume that the mistake in fact lies in the record of the poet’s lifespan. We know that IG XIV 1184 must contain a mistake somewhere, so its account must be held suspect.³² We should remember that the lifespan in the anonymous account of Menander’s life has been corrected to 52 and actually reads 57. While that latter figure is certainly incorrect, the former cannot be used as substantiating evidence. The only other specific account is that of Apollodorus, quoted by Gellius (17.4): “Ἐξέλιπε, πεντήκοντα καὶ δεῦν ἔτων”. A second, but not necessarily helpful, piece of circumstantial evidence also appears in Gellius when he mentions that C. Claudius Centho and M. Sepronius Tuditanus served as consuls “about fifty-two years” after the death of Menander. The context of this passage is not one of exactitude, as “circiter” warns us, but 52 years before 240 B.C. does yield 292, the archonship of Philippus (though inclusive reckoning produces 291).

²⁷ Having only 365 days per year, the Egyptian new year moved backwards one day every four years.

²⁸ E. Grzybek, “Du calendrier macédonien au calendrier ptolémaïque. Problèmes de chronologie hellénistique”, *Schweizerische Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft* 20 (Basel, 1990), 89–101.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 96–97.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 97 and nn. 53–54, 98 and n. 57.

³¹ *ibid.*, 183.

³² $\nu\beta'$ is the most likely reading, but not in fact the only one.

My conclusion is that both the inscription and the Apollodorus passage must be mistaken in their accounts of how long Menander lived, and that the comic playwright died at the age of fifty (in his fifty-first year). It is certainly possible that the inscriber of *IG XIV 1184* shared the tradition followed by Apollodorus. Dare I suggest that the author of our puzzle was even Apollodorus himself, rounding up from 51 to 52 in order to fit the facts of Menander's life into the comic (or "didactic") trimeter of his *Chronica* ?

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