

STEPHEN BRUNET

THE DATE OF THE FIRST BALBILLEA AT EPHEOS

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I. Ephesos 1122 is dedicated to the emperor Trajan and, as the editors note, it can be securely dated to 97-102 A.D. because Trajan holds the title of Germanicus but has not yet assumed the title of Dacicus. The occasion for the dedication was the fourth celebration of the Balbillea and some or all of the victors in that celebration of the festival may have been listed in the twelve lines which have been erased at the bottom of the inscription. The Balbillea, sometimes spelled Barbilleia, were authorized by Vespasian at the request of the astrologer Balbillus and are frequently mentioned in agonistic inscriptions.¹ The date of the first celebration of this festival is of some significance since it provides the basis for dating the careers of certain athletes.²

The Balbillea were held every four years, as is shown by an inscription from Rhodes which honors a runner for winning the Balbillea in the penteteris immediately following his previous victory.³ If the fourth celebration occurred between 97-102 A.D., then the first celebration must have taken place between 85 and 90 A.D. An even more precise date can be derived from the record of Artemidoros of Adana.⁴ This pankratiast won the Balbillea twice, once as a boy and then as a man the next time it was held. He also won the Capitolia when it was first held in 86 A.D. and on that occasion he competed in the men's age category. Therefore his victory in the Balbillea as a boy must have come before this, either in 86 A.D. or more likely in 85. His second victory would then have been in 89 or 90 A.D.

If the Balbillea were first held in 85 or 86 A.D. then there was at least a six year gap between the time when Vespasian gave the Ephesians permission to hold this new festival and the time when the Balbillea were first celebrated. This is not the only case where there was a substantial delay between the time a festival was authorized and the date it was first celebrated. Wörrle (*Chiron* 22 [1992] 339-345) has recently argued that, while the Panhellenion was founded in 131/132 A.D., the first celebration of the Panhellenia did not occur until 137 A.D. Understandably, the establishment of a major festival depended on the completion of various arrangements, such as notifying potential participants that another festival had been added to the circuit.⁵ In the case of the Balbillea, the inauguration may also have been designed to coincide with the completion of new facilities, the gymnasium complex near the harbor of Ephesos. According to Friesen, this complex was built during the reign of Domitian and was actually intended to provide facilities for another festival, the Olympeia, first held in 89 or 90 A.D.⁶ On

¹ Dio Cassius 66 (65).9.2. On the astrologer Balbillus and these games, see A. Stein, *Aegyptus* 13 (1933) 125-127 (esp. 125 note 4); F. Cramer, *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics* (*Memoirs, American Philosophical Society* 37 1954) 138; I. Ringwood Arnold, *AJA* 76 (1972) 18-19. On the Balbillea held in cities other than Ephesos, see P. Frisch, *ZPE* 15 (1974) 162 and *I. Ephesos* 1123.

² e.g., L. Moretti, *Olympionikai* (*Memorie, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei* 8.8.2 1959) 835 (the Rhodian runner cited in note 3).

³ L. Robert, *Arch. Eph.* (1966) 111 (*Op. Min.* 7, 699). Some inscriptions from Ephesos (e.g., *I. Ephesos* 686) mention a "Great Balbillea" and imply that, at least for some of its history, a major celebration of the Balbillea took place every four years with lesser festivals in the intervening years.

⁴ *IAG* 67 (*IG* 14.746; *IGR* 1.445). When it was established the Balbillea seems to have had only two age groups, although a third age group for young men (ἀγένητοι) was adopted at some later point (e.g., *I. Ephesos* 1132; *I. Smyrna* 661).

⁵ In the Roman period festivals were arranged to make travel easier for athletes. The Panhellenia were probably scheduled so that the athletes could sail to Athens after having competed in the Olympic games (see Wörrle [above] 341-342). The Capitolia, Sebasta, and Aktia were part of a summer circuit, see M. Lämmer, *Stadion* 12 (1986) 29. The Balbillea formed part of a circuit with the Koina of Asia and other games, see *CIG* 2741 (*OGIS* 509; C. Roueché, *Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias in the Roman and Late Roman Periods* [London 1993] no. 50).

⁶ S. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden, 1993) 121-141. While his other arguments are persuasive, he incorrectly suggests (135) that this complex is mentioned in *I. Ephesos* 1104: ἀρχιτέρας τοῦ σύνπαντος ζυστοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ βαλανείων τῶν Σεβ(ακτῶν); 1125: [ἀρχι]τερας τοῦ σύνπαντος [ζυστο]ῦ διὰ

the chronology proposed here, Ephesos saw two new festivals during Domitian's reign, the Balbillea which were celebrated continuously until at least the mid-third century and the Olympeia which were discontinued after Domitian's death to be reinaugurated by Hadrian.⁷

Irving, Texas

Stephen Brunet

βίου, ξυετάρχη [καὶ] ἐπὶ βαλανείων τῶν Σεβ(αετῶν); and 1155: [ἀρχιερέως] τοῦ σύν[παντος ξυετο]ῦ καὶ ἐπὶ [βαλανείων Σεβ]αετοῦ. In a similar fashion, W. West, *AHB* 4 (1990) 84-89, argues that the headquarters of the synod in Ephesos are mentioned in *I. Ephesos* 1155 and 1089 ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς [τοῦ κύμπαντος ξ]υετοῦ). However, these are references to the imperial baths and the headquarters of the synod in Rome, see M. Caldelli, *ZPE* 93 (1992) 75-87. On West's views, see Pleket's comments in *SEG* 40 1003.

⁷ On the Olympeia, see M. Lämmer, *Olympien und Hadrianeen im antiken Ephesos* (Diss. Cologne 1967), esp. 3-12; Friesen (note 6) 117-121, 137-140.