The Schedule of the Eleusinia

The place of the Eleusinia in the Athenian festival calendar has been a long-standing question. A century ago Stengel observed that we have no direct evidence. But in order to locate the celebration by indirect means, scholars have made the most of our epigraphical sources. By the end of the nineteenth century the possible date had been narrowed to the months Metageitnion or early Boedromion (August-September). For IG II² 1496.130 (IV BC) places the Eleusinia between the Panathenaia and the sacrifice to Demokratia, that is, between 28 Hekatombaion and 12 Boedromion. This season is consistent with schol. Pi. O. 9.150: the Eleusinia commemorated the grain harvest, hence in late summer. In the twentieth century, on the principle that the assembly did not meet on state festival days, Mikalson was able to eliminate early Boedromion, which shows too many assembly meetings to allow time for a major festival, and suggested that the longest time available was during 13-20 Metageitnion; Simms added that 5-8 Metageitnion also is possible.

Other testimonies are weaker but suggestive. The Tetrapolis sacrificial schedule IG II² 1358.ii.43 (Μεταγειτνιῶνος· Ἐλευσινίαι βὸς) has been taken as hinting that the Eleusinia occurred in Metageitnion, though a deme’s sacrifice to the ‘Eleusinian (goddess)’ need not have coincided with the state’s Eleusinia. The deme Erchia made a sacrifice to Demeter at the city Eleusinion on 12 Metageitnion, and Simms (1975, 270), observing that this was an assembly day, urged that this gesture makes the range 13-20 Metageitnion the more “apt” of the two possible periods in Metageitnion. Mikalson (1975, 40) noted too a private sacrifice to Demeter on 15 Metageitnion (IG II² 1367.1-3), which “may be a reflection” of the Eleusinia.

These arguments pointing to Metageitnion are thorough and compelling in themselves. But they are confirmed by a more direct testimony, and of an early

1) Stengel 1905, 2332; so also Healey 1965, 48.
2) Pfuhl 1900, 102; the question is surveyed by Klee 1918, 61-2; Kirchner ad IG II² 1496 (p. 101); Healey 1965, 28-51; Follet 1976, 329-31; Parker 2005, 468-9. Metageitnion or early Boedromion: e.g. Deubner 1932, 91; recently Parker 2005, 468; Petzl & Schwertheim 2006, 74.
3) 1 301-2 Drachmann, ἄγεται δὲ ἐν Ἀθήναις μετὰ <τῆν> τῶν Δημητριακῶν καρπῶν συλλογῆν τῇ Δήμητρι εὐχαριστήρια; cf. Diod. 5.4.
4) Mikalson 1975, 40, 46; Simms 1975, 270 (“almost certainly” Metageitnion).
5) Pfuhl 1900, 102; Kirchner, IG II² p. 101; Simms 1975, 270.
6) SEG XXI 541.B.1-5.
date, that has been overlooked by students of the Eleusinia. Pindar, in an ode for the runner Xenophon of Corinth in 464 BC, praises as well Xenophon’s father Thessalos,7) also a runner, who in the course of a single month had won twice in one day at Delphi and three times in one day at Athens (O. 13.37-9):

Πυθοὶ τ’ ἕχει σταδίου τιμὰν διαύλου θ’ ἀλύφ ἀμφ’ ἕνι, μηνός τε οἱ τωτοῦ κρανααῖς ἐν Ἀθήναις τρία ἐργα ποιήκες ἂμέρα θηκε κάλλιστ’ ἀμφὶ κόμαις.

‘At Pytho he has the honor of the stadion and the diatulos on a single day, and in the same month in rocky Athens a day of races placed around his hair three glorious achievements.’

‘In the same month’: this was recognized as a synchronism already by Joseph Scaliger, but Boeckh was still unable to name the months. By the late nineteenth century the calendars of Delphi and Athens had become known with sufficient precision. The Pythia occurred in the month Boukatios, and Boukatios at Delphi was Metageitinion at Athens.

The modern consensus about Pindar’s referent is that Thessalus competed in Athens at the Panathenaia. The Great Panathenaia in fact did fall in the Pythian year. This interpretation goes back to A. Mommsen, who held that the only possibility for Thessalos was the Panathenaia in Hekatombaion, so the Pythia on this occasion must have taken place a month earlier than normal, in Delphian Apellaos.8) This exception has been variously justified, the most credible explanation being that an intercalary month in Athens pushed Hekatombaion and the Panathenaia one position later, so as to occur in the same lunar month as Boukatios and the Pythia.9)

I would urge that we do not need to assume an exceptional circumstance to account for Pindar’s statement. The consensus for the Panathenaia derives from a time before the date of the Eleusinia was known even approximately, and indeed before this festival with contests was recognized to be distinct from the Mysteries (14-21 Boedromion). If we maintain the equation Boukatios/Metageitinion that

7) An Olympic victor in 504/3, which gives an approximate date for these other victories: schol. Pl. O. 13.1a; Moretti 1959, 79.
8) Mommsen 1878, 157-8; cf. e.g. Christ 1896, 100-1 (perhaps the contests of the Panathenaia continued over into the next month, or Pindar’s ‘same month’ means simply a span of thirty days); Gaspar & Pottier 1906, 790 (the episode was exceptional, and schedules change); Beloch 1926, 143 (perhaps the Attic year was shifted); Moretti 1959, 79; Nicholson 2005, 207.
9) Barrett 1978, 16 n. 2; supported by John Morgan (per litt.).
pertained for the rest of antiquity and assume the statistical majority of a non-intercalated year in Athens, then Thessalos competed in Athens in Metageitnion. Today we can say that only one Athenian competition in that month can come into the question, the Eleusinia. Metageitnion otherwise has to offer only the Herakleia at Kynosarges,\(^{10}\) which so far as we know did not have competitions. Certainly there was nothing in this month to attract ambitious foreign athletes except the Eleusinia,\(^{11}\) which was distinguished—and above all for footrace, which adds some likelihood that the runner Thessalos competed in the Eleusinia. The Eleusinian footrace is on record already in the sixth century BC (\textit{IG} I\textsuperscript{3} 991), and the brief description of the Eleusinia offered at schol. Pi. \textit{O}. 9.150 mentions this category alone (δρόμον ἠγωνίζοντο). I propose therefore that at the end of the sixth century Thessalos won at the Eleusinia.

The passage of Pindar shows that the Eleusinia had three categories of footrace alone. It also fixes the date in Metageitnion. The attested meetings of the Athenian \textit{ekklēsia} in Metageitnion have served to date the festival before the 21st of the month. Now the Pythia supplies a further control. We are not told for how many days the Pythian festival lasted, but they included the 7th of the month, Apollo’s birthday.\(^{12}\) This means that Thessalos cannot have been competing in Athens during 5-8 Metageitnion. That leaves only 13-20 Metageitnion available for the Eleusinia. Thessalos will have traveled there directly after his success at Delphi nearer the beginning of the month.

So the month, Metageitnion, is confirmed and delimited; but the year now raises a doubt. The Pythia took place in Olympiad year 3. The Eleusinia had both greater and lesser celebrations, \textit{pentetēris} and \textit{trietēris}. Scholars have long agreed that the greater occurred in year 2, but two theories of the whole schedule have been proposed: (a) the Great Eleusinia in Olympiad year 2, the \textit{trietēris} in years 1 and 3 (two years apart from each other in keeping with the name), no competition in year 4; or (b) the greater in year 2, the \textit{trietēris} in year 4 (two years apart

\(^{10}\) On Metageitnion see Parke 1977, 51-2: the month “contained no major event", which overviews the Eleusinia.


\(^{12}\) Schol. Pi. \textit{P}. hypoth. (II 2 Drachmann), ἡγωνίζεται τὸν Πυθικὸν ἡγώνα κατὰ ἐβδόμην ἡμέραν. Gaspar & Pottier (1906, 792) estimated five days for the festival; perhaps a week, Amandry (1990, 306). Public business could be conducted at Delphi on 11 Boukatios, and the Labyads voted their decree on the 10th (\textit{FD} III.1 294.vii.8, \textit{CIDelphes} I 9.19, both IV BC).
Kevin Clinton however has rejected the existence of two *trietêrides* in a four-year period: that option is excluded by the account *IG II²* 1672, which shows only a *pentetêris* and a *trietêris* in the quadrennium. We might add that a quadrennium that included three competitions and then none in the remaining year seems bizarre. That an Eleusinian contest occurred twice in a quadrennium should be reckoned as virtually certain. But the location in years 2/4 does not explain the evidence of Eleusinia in years 1 and 3. Clinton concluded from the latter that celebration was annual, as is natural for a harvest festival, but without competitions in years 1 and 3, which accordingly are ignored in *IG II²* 1672. Pindar invites us to reexamine this question.

Some testimonies are doubtful. Celebration of the Eleusinia in Olympiad year 1 is attested in 332 BC (*IG II²* 1496.130, archon Niketes, sale of hides); but this might not be the competition, only the annual sacrifice. And under Echekrates in 102/1 BC ephebes sacrificed at the Eleusinia (*IG II²* 1028.15), so 101 = Olympiad year 4; but again, this gesture need not prove competitions.

On the other hand, a competition is certain under Argeios in 98/7, hence 98 = year 3 (*IG II²* 2336.208, an agonothete of the Eleusinia). Year 1 is on record in imperial times in Hadrian's letter rescheduling Greek contests. Thus we have evidence of competitions on the pattern Olympiad 1/3 in the time of Pindar, in 98 BC, and under Hadrian; and of sacrifices in years 1 and 4. It is Olympiad year 2, universally reckoned as the year of the Great Eleusinia, that is the outrider in our evidence. How reliable is this?

Olympiad year 2 for the Eleusinia depends on the archon Diokles (late III BC), who is named in a sequence of four archons in the list *IG II²* 1706; his year is in position XI of the tribal cycle. The consensus since 1900 has been that this was

---

13) The first was due to Boesch (1917, 155-9), followed by some; the second to Kolbe (1908, 69-70), followed by others. Bibliography at Clinton 1979, 10-2.

14) See however the doubts of Follet (1976, 329-31); Parker (2005, 469 n. 34).

15) For the date, which goes back to Ferguson, see Tracy 1982, 202. This text implies year 4, not 3, for the ephebes’ service went from Boedromion to Metageitnion: Healey 1965, 44-5; Clinton 1979, 12 n. 40.

16) For the date, Tracy 1982, 190.

17) Petzl & Schwertheim 2006, 12 ll. 62-3, “the *panegyris* at Eleusis” in Olympiad year 1, with their discussion of the passage, p. 72-4. The competition seems by now reduced to once per quadrennium, in effect the *pentetêris*. The manipulations revealed in this text are substantial; the Pythia itself (l. 70) has been moved from its traditional Olympiad year 3 to year 4. On this inscription see also Jones 2007.
215/4, on the basis of the cycle; hence 215 BC = Olympiad year 2 is agreed for the Eleusinia. For one text shows that Diokles’ year saw a celebration of the ‘Eleusinia’; in another he is the middle of three archons under whom the ‘Great Eleusinia’ occurred, who thus are distributed at four-year intervals. Therefore the further consensus, that it was the Great Eleusinia, the pentetêris, that took place in year 2. Scholars have disagreed only over the trietêris—either year 4 or years 1 and 3. The latter option, Clinton argued, is excluded by a text that shows only two competitions per quadrennium, so the greater Eleusinia was in Olympiad 2, the lesser in Olympiad 4.

But two inscriptions from Magnesia on the Maeander have long suggested an anomaly in the Athenian tribal cycle in the late third century. The Magnesians’ narrative of their quest for asylia dates the oracle prompting the quest to archon Thrasyphon (tribal position IV) in the year before Ol. 140 and the year after a Pythia (i.e., Ol. 139.4 = Pyth. year 2 = 221), so archon year 221/0. Magnesian ambassadors were sent out in the fourteenth year from this, so 208/7, and the Athenian decree they then obtained was voted in Pyaneption, this ought to be ca. November 208. The tribal cycle however would place the decree (unknown archon, position IV) a year earlier, 209/8 = November 209. Habicht in his study of this period (1982, 159-77) accepted the cyclic date 209/8 for Thrasyphon, but with some unease (“according to all appearances”, 161).

For the archons in these years I give Habicht’s list, adding the tribal cycle positions where these are explicit, and indicating the archons in whose years celebrations of the Great Eleusinia are recorded by IG II² 1304, and also the Olympic and Pythian years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Archon</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>221/0</td>
<td>Thrasyphon V</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>220/19</td>
<td>Menekrates VI</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Olymp.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18) At once after the publication of Ferguson’s law: independently, De Sanctis 1900, 64; Kirchner 1900, 446-7.
19) IG II² 847.24: Eleusinia under Diokles. IG II² 1304.24-6: Demainetos was stratêgos in the years of Chairephon, Diokles, and Aischron, and whenever the panegyris of the Great Eleusinia was held he performed sacrifices.
20) This last equation goes back to Kolbe 1908, 69, approved e.g. by Kirchner ad IG II² 847.
22) I.Magnesia 37 (Asylia 87).
23) Bibliography on the opposing views in Asylia p. 217 n. 65.
Consider now the dates implied by the two Magnesian inscriptions, 221/0 for Thrasyphon (V) and 208/7 for Ignotus (IV). If we accept these dates, then

(a) an archon hors de série must be added somewhere in between these two.

(b) Because the sequence from Hagnias to Herakleitos is explicit in IG II² 1706, and four-year separations of Chairephon/Diokles/Aischron are given by IG II² 1304, therefore all of Chairephon through Aischron must be moved together, if they are to move—shifted by one year. The extra archon then would belong either between Thrasyphon and Chairephon, or else after Aischron.

(c) Because Pindar synchronizes Eleusinian games with the Pythia = Olympiad year 3 and therefore also year 1, this gives a reason to move Diokles by one year: but earlier or later? Dating Ignotus in 208/7 entails: later. So Chairephon moves to 218/7, etc., with Diokles at 214/3.

If this shift is admitted, an Eleusinian contest synchronizes with the Pythia, as Pindar says. This would mean that the postulated extra archon occupied either 220/19 or 219/8, and the tribal sequence then resumed as though uninterrupted. And we must subtract an archon from the decade following 208/7, where in fact a number of uncertainties reside.

Caution is in order, for the arguments on both sides are formidable. The alternatives are: either the biennial Eleusinia took place in Olympiad years 1 and 3 ca. 500 BC, 332 (perhaps), 98, and (year 1 alone) the 130’s AD, but was moved to years 2 and 4 for a time in the third century BC; or there was a dislocation of the Athenian tribal cycle in the late third century. It is a question of probabilities; in my view, Pindar tips the balance away from the tribal cycle. We have long had a reason (the Magnesian inscriptions) to put the unknown archon of tribal posi-
tion IV in 208/7, one year later than the cycle dictates; Pindar, by synchronizing the Pythia and Eleusinia, adds a second reason to move Diokles by one year, again in violation of the cycle. These together suggest that such a violation occurred and that this string of archons should be down-dated by one year. I cannot explain the violation; but neither have those who rely on the tribal cycle explained how the Athenians can have voted in autumn 209, earlier than the Magnesians’ request.24)

Diokles, now in autumn 214 and a Pythian year = Olympiad year 3, is reported to have witnessed the Great Eleusinia rather than the lesser (IG II² 1304). The implication is that the pentetēris occurred in Olympiad 3, the trietēris in Olympiad 1.

A list of expenditures from the fourth century BC shows that the lesser and the greater Eleusinia had the same categories of competition; they differed in the higher value of prizes in the latter.25) A section of Nikomachos’ sacrificial code devoted to the Eleusinia comes under the heading τὰ τὸ ἕτερον ἔτος θύεται αὐτῷ, “in alternate years.”26) Concerning the disputed periodicity, that heading is inconclusive, consistent with either (a), referring to two trietērides per quadrennium, or (b), referring to the pentetēris and the one trietēris. I follow Clinton in restricting the Eleusinian competitions to two per quadrennium (b), so that this list describes the greater and the lesser games, which thus had the same sacrifices as well as the same competitions. The sacrifices in the two off-years will certainly have been less grand, and perhaps were supplied by the deme Eleusis rather than the Athenian state. The periodicity Olympiad 1/3 would be consistent with the state’s sale of hides attested in 332 BC = Olympiad 1 (IG II² 1496.130). And it was in an off-year (101 BC = year 4) that the ephebes brought (παρήγαγον) two oxen to the Eleusinia which they sacrificed (IG II² 1028.15).

24) John Morgan, on quite other grounds, will argue that in fact this whole list of archons and more needs to be shifted later by one year—including Thrasyphon, which would eliminate the need to postulate a rupture in the cycle immediately after him. See Habicht 2000, 10; Parker 2005, 469 n. 35. A study of Thrasyphon by Michael Osborne has been announced for ZPE 164.

25) IG II² 1672.258-61: εἰς τὴν τριετηρίδα τῶν Ἑλευσινίων εἰς τῶν γυμνικῶν ἀγώνα καὶ τῆς ἱπποδρομίας καὶ τοῦ πατρίου ἀγώνος καὶ τῆς μουσικῆς, and (with a different sequence) εἰς τὴν πεντετηρίδα τῶν Ἑλευσινίων εἰς τῶν γυμνικῶν ἀγώνα καὶ τῆς μουσικῆς καὶ τῆς ἱπποδρομίας καὶ τοῦ πατρίου. To the greater was added on this occasion an extra horserace: εἰς τὴν ἱπποδρομίαν τὴν προστεθέσαν κατὰ ψήφισμα. See Healey 1965, 24.

26) As first seen by Ferguson; the text is now Lambert’s Face A fr. 5.64-86. See Healy 1965; Lambert 2002, 377.
The probability, then, is that at the end of the sixth century it was the Great Eleusinia that caused the runner Thessalos to hasten from Delphi to Athens, where he swept the field.\footnote{I am most grateful for advice and references to John Morgan (who will argue his own view on these matters elsewhere) and to Joshua Sosin.}

5840 S. Stony Island Ave, Apt. 3F K.J. Rigsby
Chicago, IL 60637, USA
k rigsby@duke.edu

Received: June 2008; accepted: July 2008

Bibliography

Amandry, P. 1990. La fête des Pythia, PAA 65, 279-317
Beloch, K.J. 1926. Griechische Geschichte, I.2 (Berlin/Leipzig)
Boesch, P. 1917. Ἐλευσίνια, BPhW 37, 155-9
Christ, W. 1896. Pindari carmina (Leipzig)
Clinton, K. 1979. IG F 5, the Eleusinia, and the Eleusinians, AJPh 100, 1-12
De Sanctis, G. 1900. Studi sugli arconti atteniesi, RIFC 28, 43-68
Deubner, L. 1932. Attische Feste (Berlin)
Habicht, C. 1982. Studien zur Geschichte Athens in hellenistischer Zeit (Göttingen)
——— 2000. Athènes hellénistique (Paris)
Kirchner, J. 1900. Review of Ferguson, Athenian Archons, GGA 162, 433-81
Klee, T. 1918. Zur Geschichte der gymnischen Agone (Leipzig)
Kolbe, W. 1908. Die attischen Archonten (Berlin)
Mikalson, J. 1975. The Sacred and Civil Calendar of the Athenian Year (Princeton)
Mommsen, A. 1878. Delphika (Leipzig)
Moretti, L. 1959. Olympionikai, MAL ser. VIII 8, 55-198
Parker, R. 2005. Polytheism and Society at Athens (New York)
Petzl, G., Schwertheim, E. 2006. Hadrian und die dionysischen Künstler (Bonn)
Pfuhl, E. 1900. De Atheniensium pompis sacris (Berlin)
Simms, R. 1975. The Eleusinia in the Sixth to Fourth Centuries B.C., GRBS 16, 269-79
Tracy, S.V. 1982. IG IF 2336: Contributors to the First Fruits for the Pythai (Meissenheim am Glan)