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THE DATE AT 2 MACCABEES 11.21

In the course of describing the events of the 160s B.C.E., 2 Maccabees presents the texts of four letters: the Seleucid general Lysias to the Jews granting some concessions and referring their other demands to the king (11.16–21); two letters of Antiochus, to Lysias (11.22–6) and to the Jews (11.27–33), granting various concessions; and Roman envoys to the Jews (11.34–8) endorsing Lysias' concessions. The third and fourth letters have at their ends (suspiciously) the same date, 15 Xanthikos of Seleucid year 148, *c*. March 164 B.C.E. The second has no date. The first, Lysias' letter, is dated ἔτους ἑκατοστοῦ τεσσαρακοστοῦ ὀγδόου, διοσκορινθίου τετράδι καὶ εἰκάδι: year 148 on the 24th of a month; but the month name, standardly printed as Διὸς Κορινθίου,[1] is impossible.

The author of 2 Maccabees as we have it assigned these texts to a single occasion and took the king to be Antiochus IV. The reality, most clearly laid out by Christian Habicht, is that the two royal letters are out of sequence, and they contain a significant difference. The second of the two grants a temporary amnesty, conditional upon the laying down of arms; the first (opening with mention of the death of 'my father') grants permanent amnesty. As has long been recognized, the second letter is from Antiochus IV during the military campaign of 165/4, the first is from Antiochus V and dates to its cessation in 163 or 162 (Antiochus IV died toward the end of 164). The letters of Lysias and the Romans precede the earlier of the royal letters, that of Antiochus IV.[2] These differences of kings and occasions were lost on the author of 2 Maccabees, and on his readers.

The date 15 Xanthikos at the end of the letter of Antiochus IV (11.33) is highly dubious, as Habicht has shown:[3] for the deadline that the king gives for the laying down of arms, 30 Xanthikos, makes it most unlikely that he was writing from afar a mere two weeks before that deadline. As to 15 Xanthikos of the Romans' letter (11.38), a doublet of that in the preceding letter, it is enough to say that the Romans did not use the Macedonian calendar.[4] But what of the date attached

[1] R. Hanhart, 'Zum Text des 2. und 3. Makkabäerbuches', *Nachr. Göttingen* 1961.13, 473–4; and his *Septuaginta* IX.2 (Göttingen, 1959), the modern edition.

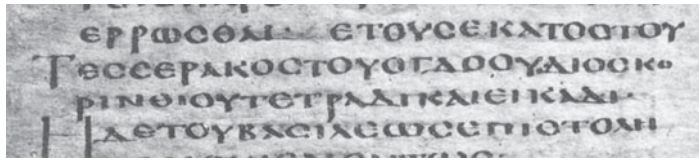
[2] C. Habicht, 'Royal documents in Maccabees II', *HSPh* 80 (1976), 1–18; and his commentary *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* 9 (1976), 256–60. He had consulted, among others, A. Momigliano, who takes much the same view about the relation of the letters but holds that the Antiochus V text is a forgery: 'The second book of Maccabees', *CPh* 70 (1975), 81–8.

[3] Habicht (n. 2), 10–13.

[4] In fact, Republican officials, unlike Hellenistic kings, did not date their letters at all (nor did Cicero or Pliny). And when a Greek city dockets a Roman letter with its local arrival date, that entry precedes rather than follows the text: R.K. Sherk, *Roman Documents from the Greek East.* Senatus Consulta *and* Epistulae *to the Age of Augustus* (Baltimore, 1969), nos 43.1; 58.1, 73, 85; 62.11; 67.1.

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to Lysias' letter (11.21)?



Codex Alexandrinus fol. 502: from https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015057077862;view=1up;seq=441

The string διοσκορινθίου is already given by the two oldest Greek manuscripts, the *Alexandrinus* in the fifth century and the *Venetus* in the eighth.[5] It is not a month name, Macedonian or otherwise, and attempts at emendation began early. Variants of *dioscor-* are in the manuscripts of the Latin and of other translations. It should not need saying that the Seleucids used the Macedonian calendar.[6] Habicht judged the text of 11.21 hopeless.

It is visible that διοσκορινθίου is not a misspelled attempt to write one of the twelve Macedonian months: we should conclude that it is not a misspelling of a word but a replacement of a word, brought into the text from elsewhere—whether in the margin or interlinear—and supplanting the original month name, whatever that was. The error was not palaeographical but intellectual.

The troublesome string of letters points to a popular Greek phrase: Διὸς Κόρινθος, 'Zeus's son Korinthos'.[7] Often expressed and explained, from Pindar to the fifteenth century, it is a critical comment, a complaint about repetitiousness or idle bombast. So, succinctly, the scholiast to Ar. *Ran.* 439: παροιμία ἐπὶ τῶν τὰ αὐτὰ συνεχῶς λεγόντων, 'a saying for those who continually say the same things'.[8] The explanation offered by most ancient commentators was that Corinthian orators repeatedly evoked their city's founder, Zeus's son Korinthos.[9]

For the ancients, the *locus classicus* for the saying was the finale of Pindar's *Nemean* 7 (104–5), ταὐτὰ τρὶς τετράκις τ' ἀμπολεῖν … 'Διὸς Κόρινθος', 'to repeat the same things three and four times … a "Zeus's son Korinthos"'. Thus the expression was already current in the first part of the fifth century B.C.E. Aristophanes applied it to a

[5] The *Venetus* at 11.21 diverges slightly from the *Alexandrinus* in inserting καὶ and rephrasing the final numeral: ἔτους ἑκατοστοῦ καὶ τεσσαρακοστοῦ καὶ ὀγδόου, διοσκορινθίου εἰκάδι τετάρτῃ.

[6] E.g. R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1913), 1.147, 'most probably, an error for Διοσκυροῦ (i.e. the third month of the Cretan calendar) … the name betrays the king's love of introducing Hellenic novelties into the very calendar of the East'. Similarly, Hanhart (n. 1), 473–4. But a month Διοσκυρός is not attested in the inscriptions of Crete (only in the medieval hemerologia manuscripts: cf. A.E. Samuel, *Greek and Roman Chronology* [Munich, 1972], 172–5), nor is the cult of the Dioscuri. In fact, no Greek month seems to have been named for Dioscuri: C. Trümpy, *Untersuchungen zu den altgriechischen Monatsnamen* (Heidelberg, 1997), 291–2.

[7] B. Niese, 'Kritik der beiden Makkabäerbücher', *Hermes* 35 (1900), 268–307, 453–527, at 483 saw the similarity to the phrase, but deduced that, if this is what Antiochus wrote, he coined a month-name to honour Corinth; W. Dittenberger, 'Dioskorios', *RE* 5 (1903), 1085–6, at 1085 dismissed this as not credible. The phrase does not seem to have been mentioned since.

[8] Cf. schol. Ar. *Eccl.* 828 ταυτολογία καὶ λῆροι; Zen. 3.21 παροιμία ἐπὶ τῶν τὰ αὐτὰ λεγόντων καὶ πραττόντων.

[9] E.g. Demon, *FGrHist.* 327 F 19; schol. Pl. *Euthyd.* 292e; Paus. Att. δ 17 Erbse; Phot. *Lex.* δ 656 Theodoridis.

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repeated action (*Ran.* 439) and to empty boasting (*Eccl.* 828, also Philostr. *V S* 611), Plato to a topic that has been exhausted (*Euthyd.* 292e), Plutarch to a tautological argument (*Mor.* 1072B), Libanius to a repetitious letter (*Ep.* 651.3).

But most pertinent here are some scholia to Thucydides. When at 3.116.3 Thucydides writes for the third time his jingle 'the year ended in the war of which Thucydides wrote the history', a commentator urged 'one has to write here "Zeus's son Korinthos"', χρεὼν Διὸς Κόρινθον ἐνταυθοῖ γράφειν. On 'the year ended', etc. at 6.7.4, he complained 'in "Thucydides", once again a Zeus's son Korinthos', πάλιν Διὸς Κόρινθον ἐν Θουκυδίδῃ. And when he read the year's end sentence at 7.18.4, exasperated, he offered a trimeter: '"Thucydides": everybody look at the Zeus's son Korinthos here', Θουκυδίδης· πᾶς τὸν Διὸς Κόρινθον ἐνταυθοῖ βλέπε.[10] So this phrase, as a criticism of repetitiousness, was something a reader might write in his copy of a text—in the case of Thucydides, earlier than the tenth/eleventh-century manuscript in which we find these complaints. In Roman times, as late as the sixth century (for example Thomas Schol. *Anth. Gr.* 16.315), and again in the Late Byzantine period, Thucydides was studied as a rhetorician, but far less so in the intervening eighth to thirteenth centuries:[11] these comments on Thucydides' repetitiousness have a good chance of being ancient.

I propose that this phrase stood in 2 Maccabees 11.21, beside or above the line where Lysias' letter ends and the first Antiochus letter begins. The annotator, like the author, thought that Antiochus IV wrote both letters, each surveying much the same set of concessions, some of these cast in the same terms; and then the concessions are summarized in the last text, the Romans' letter. He labelled all this a needless repetition, Διὸς Κόρινθος.[12] A later copyist, not recognizing the slogan, took the string of letters to be not a critic's comment but a correction of a word in the line. He thought that that word was the month. Of necessity, he put the saying in the genitive, and apparently inserted an iota that makes it sound like a month name. Whichever was the Macedonian month, it would have been the only proper name in the line.

In the *Venetus*, the date attached to the last of the letters, the Romans' letter, offers its own impossibility. To the date 15 Xanthikos has been appended a second name: ἔτους ἑκατοστοῦ καὶ τεσσαρακοστοῦ καὶ ὀγδόου, ξανθικοῦ πεντεκαιδεκάτῃ διοσκορίδου; no modern editor prints this last word, nor is it given in the *Alexandrinus*. I suggest that it derives from a second instance of the gloss Διὸς Κόρινθος, placed at the end of this, the fourth and last of the letters.

That is, at the start of the second letter and at the end of the fourth, a commentator bracketed these three with the comment 'Repetition', Διὸς Κόρινθος. Both notes were subsequently taken into the text itself, mistaken by a copyist for corrections. Our two

[10] C. Hude, *Scholia in Thucydidem* (Leipzig, 1927), 227, 331, 379: all from *Pal. gr.* 252 (X/XI cent.). Many Thucydides scholia are probably late, but some have been shown to go back to Imperial and even Hellenistic scholarship: see O. Luschnat, 'Die Thukydidesscholien', *Philologus* 98 (1954), 14–58.

[11] See S. Kennedy, 'A classic dethroned: the decline and fall of Thucydides in Middle Byzantium', *GRBS* 58 (2018), 607–35.

[12] He would already have read and doubtless approved 1 Maccabees 15.22, where, after quoting a Roman consul's letter to Ptolemy VII, the narrative continues that the consul 'wrote the same things' to other recipients, and does not repeat those texts. The two books of Maccabees quote many documents elsewhere than in 2 Maccabees 11, but each in isolation, and so offered the critic no comparable instance of repetition.

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early manuscripts thus both present διοσκορινθίου as the month of Lysias' letter. At the end of the letters, in the *Venetus* the intrusive word has evolved into διοσκορίδου, probably under the influence of the familiar personal name Dioscorides; by contrast, at this place the scribe of the *Alexandrinus*, like modern editors, ignored or deleted the word as obviously superfluous, as he saw that there was already a month-name attached to the Romans' letter.

If this suggestion is correct, these intrusions in the text had occurred by the fifth century, the time of the *Alexandrinus*. But it has long been known that the text of 2 Maccabees, itself already an epitome, was in its turn heavily redacted from an early date.[13]

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MEMMIUS, CICERO AND LUCRETIUS: A NOTE ON CIC. *FAM.* 13.1*

A recent piece in this journal by Morgan and Taylor made the case that C. Memmius is not to be seen as an active prosecutor of Epicureanism but rather as an Epicurean himself, who merely has disagreed with the grimly orthodox Epicurean sect in Athens.[1] As such, Memmius' building intentions for Epicurus' home could have been to create an honorary monument or possibly even construct a grander locus for pilgrimage and the practice of Epicureanism.[2] This note adds to their findings by considering allusions to *De Rerum Natura* found in *Fam.* 13.1 and the implications of Cicero speaking to Memmius in Lucretius' striking language. Cicero expresses his judgement on *De Rerum Natura*, famously, at *QFr.* 2.10.3, *Lucreti poemata ut scribis ita sunt, multis luminibus ingeni, multae tamen artis. sed cum ueneris, uirum te putabo si Sallusti Empedoclea legeris, hominem non putabo*,[3] and Memmius, of course, is the addressee

[13] Warm thanks to the editor and reviewers at *CQ* and especially to Dr Thomas Coward, who kindly inspected for me the *Venetus* in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.

* I want to give heartful thanks to the reader of *CQ* and to Benjamin T. Lee for their comments and suggestions.

[1] L. Morgan and B. Taylor, 'Memmius the Epicurean', *CQ* 67 (2017), 528–41.

[2] As M. Griffin had suggested, 'Nor do we know that Memmius was not planning to build a new building in honour of Epicurus on the site of his ruined house', in 'Philosophical badinage in Cicero's *Letters*', in J.G.F. Powell (ed.), *Cicero the Philosopher: Twelve Papers* (Oxford, 1995), 325–46, at 333 n. 36.

[3] For discussion, see F.H. Sandbach, '*Lucreti poemata* and the poet's death', *CR* 40 (1940), 72–7; E.J. Kenney, '*Doctus Lucretius*', *Mnemosyne* 23 (1970), 366–92, at 366–8; and F.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero: Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem et M. Brutum* (Cambridge, 1980), ad loc. For Cicero's reception of Lucretius more generally, see W.A. Merrill, 'Cicero's knowledge of Lucretius' poem', *University of California Publications on Classical Philology* 2 (1909), 35–42; G.C. Pucci, 'Echi Lucreziani in Cicerone', *SIFC* 38 (1966), 70–132; P. Hardie, 'Lucretius and later Latin literature in antiquity', in S. Gillespie and P. Hardie (edd.), *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge, 2007), 111–30, at 113; and S. Gatzemeier, *Ut ait Lucretius: Die Lukrezrezeption in der lateinischen Prosa bis Laktanz* (Göttingen, 2013), 27–42.

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