

# Epicurus' Birthday 2023 - (The Most Comprehensive Picture Yet!)

Post by “Eikadistes” of November 29, 2022 at 10:21 PM

I think I just want more evidence that **μηνὸς Γαμηλιῶνος ἑβδόμη** should be translated to something like "the seventh month of Gamelion" instead of the traditional "month of Gamelion's *Seventh*."

I **do** see a number of reasons that support this hypothesis. The former solves our *birthday discrepancy*. Apollodorus of Athens could have used the word "seventh" as a gloss to clarify which month on the Attic calendar corresponded with "Gamelion" because there *were* dozens of dissimilar calendars in the ancient world and informing the reader which sequentially-numbered month they were in helps provide context. Hundreds of years later, I imagine biographers, living under different calendar systems, would have found approximations more useful than exact calculations. Early authors ran the same risk of having lost things in translation just as we are now. Similarly, for readers' sense of context, it would have been less helpful to know the date of an unknown time of year, than to know the time of year but not the date.

At the same time, Apollodorus of Athens could have chosen to write an ancient greek numeral instead of the name of the number (I believe "Ζ" for the numeral "VII" or "7"), *or* he could have placed the words **μηνὸς** (mēnós) "month of" and **ἑβδόμη** (hebdómēi) "seventh" together. He was also only born 90 years after Epicurus died, and lived in Athens, so he and his readers would have been familiar with the Attic calendar, and a descriptive gloss may have been unnecessary. Having lived just a century earlier, I imagine that Epicurus' exact birthdate would have been recorded. Given that Apollodorus recorded Socrates' birthdate, who lived 300 years before him, it seems like he could have easily verified Epicurus', particularly given his popularity and the availability of documentation.

Then again, it seems weird to me that 7's would be used so repetitively. It seems more likely that Epicurus' birthday fell on the Twentieth celebration than it does that he was born in the *seventh* day, of the *seventh* month, *seven* years after Plato. Though, I suppose that, too, could have been a coincidence, and such a coincidence is worthy of writing about, so maybe instead of just including the month (and/or date), Apollodorus of Athens also included the Plato fact for rhetorical emphasis. Of course, that may have, itself, been an exaggeration made with a poetic license.

Still, if that is the case, and he was born on Gamelion 7, I think it begs an answer to the question of "Why did Epicurus adopt the the celebration date of the pre-existing cult of the Twentieth when he could have used his birthday?" Nearly every day of the Attic month is holy on some level, and has some symbolic meaning, and we already discussed the Attic symbology

of the Seventh. It seems to me that Epicurus having been being born **on** the 20th *is* what **makes** the Twentieth significant, *sort of* like being born on a February 29th of a Leap Year.

This is why I am still split on what I see as being an unknown.