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## Athenion of Athens Revisited\*

**Summary:** The usual view historiography has taken into account about the controversial data concerning the politician Athenion of Athens, mainly based in the perspective of one of Posidonius' extant fragments, has portrayed Athenion as a tyrant. A close look at the information we have about him and his policies allows to ask new questions and to get a deeper perspective about the complex age of Athenian history that led the city to take part in the Ist Mithridatic War on the Pontic side, against Rome.

**Keywords:** Athenion of Athens, Ist Mithridatic War, Aristion, Delos, Hoplite General, Apellicon.

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The controversial politician, Athenion of Athens, was the consequence of an unstable period in Late Hellenistic Athens. In fact, the historical context involving the political activities of Athenion at Athens is mainly complex, both for the incoherence of our sources and for the difficult times of the Ist Mithridatic War. Despite the evidences available for him, there are still some facts that need further and detailed attention so that a clearer image of Athenion and his Athenian government can be gleaned.

To understand Athenion's motives, we need to examine the effects of Rome's conquest of Greece after the Achaean War of 148–146 BC<sup>1</sup>. Greatly benefited from the aftermath of the battle of Pydna and the destruction of Corinth, Athens

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<sup>1</sup> All dates are in B. C. unless stated otherwise.

obtained from Rome economic prosperity, protection and favour<sup>2</sup>. In fact, Romans promoted Athens as the superpower of Greece<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, Rome granted Athens possession of the island of Delos, which after the creation of the province of Asia between 132 and 129 BC, enhanced its importance as a commercial centre, providing Athens with important economic resources. Thus, Athens had flourished to such an extent economically, that these times can be considered as a Bronze Age for Athens – reflecting its hitherto maritime empire during its 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC Golden Age and the Silver Age of Lycurgus<sup>4</sup>. However, prosperity began to decline by the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC and economic recession is clearly visible by 100 BC when an important slave revolt caused the deaths of many Athenian citizens<sup>5</sup>. The economic crisis worsened through the 90s<sup>6</sup> and debt plunged much of the Athenian population into poverty caused by debts<sup>7</sup>. It is conceivable that Roman non-intervention in the area exacerbated the situation. But even if Rome was not solely the primary factor in Athens' demise, local public opinion, and most of the Hellenistic world, blamed the entire situation on the excesses derived from Roman

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<sup>2</sup> Vid. W. Ferguson, *Hellenistic Athens: an Historical Essay*, London 1911, 415–417; Cl. Mossé, *Athens in Decline: 404–86 B. C.*, London 1973, 138–151; Ed. Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique*, 323–30 av. J.-C., Paris 1979–1982 [2003], vol. II, 396–400, 477–481; R. M. Kallet-Marx, *Hegemony to Empire. The Development of the Roman Imperium in the East from 148 to 62 B. C.*, Berkeley 1996, 198–212; C. Habicht, *Athens from Alexander to Anthony*, Cambridge 1997, 233–245; H. Mattingly, *Athens between Rome and the Kings, 229/8 to 129 B. C.*, in: P. Cartledge – P. Garnsey – E. Gruen (eds.), *Hellenistic Constructs. Essays in Culture, History and Historiography*, London 1997, 120–144; T. Naco – B. Antela-Bernárdez – I. Arrayas-Morales – S. Busquets-Artigas, *The Impact of the Roman Intervention in Greece and Asia Minor upon Civilians (88–63 B. C.)*, in: B. Antela – T. Naco (eds.), *Transforming Historical Landscapes in the Ancient Empires*, Oxford 2009, 33–51.

<sup>3</sup> S. Accame, *Il dominio romano in Grecia dalla guerra arcaica ad Augusto*, Roma 1946, 163.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Mitchel, *Athens in the Age of Alexander*, G&R 12, 1965, 189–204.

<sup>5</sup> Athen. VI, 272F; Oros. V, 9.5 S. V. Tracy, *Athens in 100*, HSPH 83, 1979, 213–235, 233–234.

<sup>6</sup> E. Candiloro, *Politica e Cultura en Atene da Pidna alla Guerra Mitridaica*, SCO 14, 1965, 134–176, 144 suggests that there was also an agricultural background to the crisis; Athenian production failed, resulting in a deterioration of the city's means of subsistence.

<sup>7</sup> There are other causes to Athens' crisis beyond Roman intervention; to this effect, special attention should be placed on the decline of commercial activity on the island of Delos: J.-L. Ferrary, *Délos vers 58 av. J.-C.*, in: J.-C. Dumont – J.-L. Ferrary – P. Moreau – Cl. Nicolet (eds.), *Insula Sacra. La loi gabinia-calpurnia de Délos (58 av. J.-C.)*, Rome 1980, 35–44, esp. 37–40. The decline began towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. B. C., as evidenced, for example, in the decreasing number of participants in the *Pythaidēs*: G. Daux, *Delphes au II<sup>e</sup> et au I<sup>er</sup> siècle: depuis l'abaissement de l'Étolie jusqu'à la paix romaine*, 191–31 av. J. C., Paris 1936, 561; Accame (n. 3) 169; S. Dow, *The First Enneteric Delian Pythais*, HSPH 51, 1940, 111–124; S. V. Tracy, *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2336 Contributors of First Fruits for the Pythais*, Meisenheim am Glan 1982, 146–153.

hegemony<sup>8</sup>. Paradoxically, the good relations that had been established by Rome and Athens, after the victory at Pydna and the fatal fate of Corinth<sup>9</sup>, had also led to resentment from certain social groups, especially those feeling the economic and fiscal pressure of Rome<sup>10</sup>. Hostility was especially felt among the working classes and compounded by Mithridates Eupator VI's propaganda which, through the 90s, clearly aimed at breaking Athens' loyalty to Rome<sup>11</sup>. Like in the rest of the Hellenistic world after the Roman conquest, the control of Athens seems to have fallen into the hands of a pro-Roman group of aristocrats. The leader of this group was Medeios of Piraeus, the most prominent figure in Athenian politics and probably the local aristocracy's representative before Rome<sup>12</sup>.

In the year 91 BC, Medeios held the position of Eponymous Archon for three consecutive years<sup>13</sup>. He had previously held this position in 100<sup>14</sup>, probably during

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**8** E. Gabba, *Roma e la pubblica opinione greca fra II e I secolo a. C.*, in: M. Sordi (ed.), *Fazione e congiure nel mondo antico*, Milano 1999, 73–80, esp. 74–78. On Roman taxation, vid. E. Frezouls, *La fiscalité procinciale de la République au Principat*, Ktema 11, 1986, 17–28.

**9** On the question of Athens as *civitas libera et foederata* after the Achaean War: Tac. ann. II, 53; Strab. IX, 398. Also, vid. H. Horn, *Foederati: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte ihrer Rechtsstellung im Zeitalter der römischen Republik und des frühen Principats*, Frankfurt 1929, 65.

**10** Good examples of the impression on public opinion are recorded in Pol. 36, 9, 1–10, 7. Cft. Gabba (n. 8) 73, 76–77; B. C. McGing, *The Foreign Policy of Mithridates VI Eupator, King of Pontus*, Leiden 1986, 105–107. The controversial text Macc. I 8 also transmits the same idea. Likewise, Mithridates' famous letter to king Arsaces, elaborated by Sallustius (Sall. hist. frg. IV, 69), accused the Romans and described them as thieves, with the object of vindicating an idea that must have been quite widespread throughout the Hellenic world. On Sallustius' letter, vid. E. Bikerman, *La lettre de Mithridate dans les Histoires de Salluste*, REL 24, 1946, 131–151; E. Adler, *Who's Anti-Roman? Sallust and Pompeius Trogus on Mithridates*, CJ 101, 2006, 386–404.

**11** Impoverishment of the Athenian population: Athen. V, 212A; Paus. I, 20.5; D. Glew, *The Selling of the King: A Note on Mithridates Eupator's Propaganda in 88 B. C.*, Hermes 105, 1977, 253–256, 255; Tracy (n. 5) 207.

**12** As demonstrated by the influential role his son played as part of Sulla's close circle during the siege to Athens: Plut. Sul. 14.9; E. Badian, *Rome, Athens and Mithridates*, AJAH 1, 1976, 105–128, 121 n. 12; J. Verdejo Manchado – B. Antela-Bernárdez, *Pro-Mithridatic and Pro-Roman Tendencies in Delos in the Early First Century B. C.: the Case of Dikaioi of Ionidai (ID 2039 and 2040) (DHA 41)*, 2015 (in print).

**13** An unprecedented event in Athens' history: Badian (n. 12) 108; S. Dow, *The List of Athenian Archons*, Hesperia 3, 1934, 140–190, 146. On Medeios, vid. Candiloro (n. 6), 143; K. Karila-Cohen, *La Pythaïde et la socialisation des élites athéniennes aux IIe et Ier siècles avant notre ère*, in: J.-C. Couvenhes – S. Milanezi (eds.), *Individus, groupes et politiques à Athènes de Solon à Mithridate*, Tours 2007, 365–383; B. Antela-Bernárdez, *Entre Delos, Atenas, Roma y el Ponto: Medeo del Pireo*, Faventia 31, 2009, 49–60.

**14** J. Kirchner, *Prosopographia Attica*, Berlin 1901–1903, § 10098. Badian (n. 12) 106; B. Antela-Bernárdez, *Sila no vino a aprender Historia Antigua: El asedio de Atenas en 87/6 a. C.*, REA 111,

the slave revolt. During the 90s he held several official positions. His pre-eminence is probably attributable to the commercial prosperity of Delos. Medeios must have represented a pressure group that wielded considerable power in Athenian public life. It comprised wealthy members of aristocratic origin normally linked to Delian commerce<sup>15</sup>. They, in turn, represented the fundamental base for Rome's support in Athens<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless, by 88, Medeios had disappeared without a trace.

With Medeios gone, Athenion took the Athenian political stage. The main source about him is a fragment of Posidonius reproduced in „The Deipnosophistae“ of Athenaeus of Naucratis. The fragment describes how the poor Peripatetic philosopher Athenion, having gained the friendship of Mithridates at his court, returned to Athens, in Posidonios' text, as ambassador of Mithridates to the Athenians<sup>17</sup>. After a tumultuous mass reception in the city, Athenion delivered a passionate speech highlighting the city's current dire predicament: „What

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2009, 475–492, 478. While Medeios served as Archon in Athens, M. Aquillius, consul of Rome, negotiated and participated in the outbreak of hostilities between Mithridates and Rome: vid. D. G. Glew, *Mithridates Eupator and Rome: A Study of the Background of the First Mithridatic War*, *Athenaeum* 65, 1977, 380–405, 393–394.

**15** P. MacKendrick, *The Athenian Aristocracy 339 to 31 B. C.*, Cambridge, Mass. 1969, 55; Badian (n. 12) 106; M.-F. Baslez, *Délos durant la première guerre de Mithridate*, in: F. Coarelli et al. (eds.), *Delo e l'Italia*, Rome 1982, 51–66, 52 n. 7; B. Antela-Bernárdez, *Viejas y nuevas aristocracias en la Atenas Mitridática*, in: O. Olesi et. al. (eds.), *Lo viejo y lo nuevo en las sociedades antiguas*, Besançon 2016 (in print).

**16** J. Briscoe, *Rome and the Class Struggle in the Greek States 200–146 B. C.*, *P&P* 36, 1967, 3–20, 7, explores the process, which gave way to relations between the Greek *poleis* aristocracy and Roman authorities. On the other hand, Rome was deeply interested in the island of Delos: on the relationship between Athens and Delos during this period, Habicht (n. 2) 246–263. On the Roman interests in Delos, see C. Hasenohr – C. Müller, *Gentilices et circulation des Italiens: quelques réflexions méthodologiques*, in: iid. (eds.), *Les Italiens dans le Monde Grec, IIe siècle av. J. C. - Ier siècle ap. J. C.*, Paris 2002, 13–16; C. Habicht, *Roman Citizens in Athens* (228–31), in: M. C. Hoff – S. I. Rotroff (eds.), *The Romanization of Athens*, Oxford 1997, 9–17; C. Hasenohr, *Les Italiens à Délos: entre romanité et hellénisme*, *Pallas* 73, 2007, 221–232. On Athens and Rome, Candiloro (n. 6) 134–176.

**17** Throughout the Hellenistic period it was common for rulers to develop close ties with philosophers, like Mithridates and Athenion. Other similar *philoi* also frequented Mithridates' court: Th. C. Sarikakis, *Les Vêpres Éphésiennes de l'an 88 av. J.-C.*, *EETHess* 15, 1976, 253–264, 262. Posidonius' assessment of Athenion in Athenaeus, described as one of king Mithridates' *philoi*, reflects this reality, and should not be surprising, if indeed he occupied a privileged and close position to the king as philosopher and scholar at the service of Pontus. Iconographic links between philosopher and monarch archetypes have already been noted by R. R. Smith, *Kings and Philosophers*, in: A. Bulloch et. al. (eds.), *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*, Berkeley 1993, 202–212; McGing (n. 10) 92–93.

then do I advise?—Not to bear this state of anarchy any longer, which the Roman Senate makes continue, while it is deciding what constitution you are to enjoy for the future. And do not let us be indifferent to our temples being closed, to our gymnasia being left in the dirt, to our theatre being always empty, and our courts of justice mute, and the Pnyx, consecrated by the oracles of the gods, being taken from the people. Let us not, O Athenians, be indifferent to the sacred voice of Bacchus being reduced to silence, to the holy temple of Castor and Pollux being closed, and to the schools of the philosophers being silenced as they are<sup>18</sup>.

Summarizing Athenion's portrait of Athens at his arrival, the situation seems to be one of deep confusion and crisis, for he declared the city to be in *anarchia*: sanctuaries remained shut; gymnasiums were neglected; theatres did not host assemblies; courts were silent; and the Pnyx was inactive. He apportioned blame on the Roman Senate and was subsequently named στρατηγός ἐπὶ τὰ ὄπλα<sup>19</sup> by the Athenians. Shortly after, if we believe Posidonius' (or maybe Athenaeus') assessment, he became Athens' tyrant.

Scholars have certainly invested a lot of attention to this fragment<sup>20</sup>. The complex unravelling of Athenion's character is made more difficult due to the nature of the source: Athenaeus' quotation of Posidonios' fragment is in fact the unique literary source to mention him. Other authors dealing with Athens during the First Mithridatic War mention the Epicurean philosopher, Aristion, as the city's tyrant. Discussion in this paper will follow the assumption that they are different persons<sup>21</sup>.

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**18** Athen. V, 212–213. Cft. L. Edelstein – I. G. Kidd, *Posidonius: The Fragments*, Cambridge 1989, fr. 253 E–K; *id.*, *Posidonius: The Commentary*, Cambridge 1988, vol. 2.2, 963–987. The text seems highly controversial, leading to academic discussion: J. Toulomakos, *Zu Poseidonios* Fr. 36 (=Athenaios 5, 214 a–b), *Philologus* 110, 1966, 138–142; P. Van Berneden, *Poseidonios von Apamea*, Fr. 36 (Athenaios V, 214 a–b), *Philologus* 113, 1969, 151–156, both with full bibliography. **19** On this position, *vid.* D. J. Geagan, *The Athenian Constitution after Sulla*, Princeton 1967, 18–31; *id.*, *The Athenian Elite: Romanization, Resistance, and the Exercise of Power*, in: Hoff – Rotroff (n. 16) 21–22.

**20** The main different approaches on the subject are included in the extensive bibliography, compiled by G. R. Bugh, *Athenion and Aristion of Athens*, *Phoenix* 46, 1992, 108–123, 111; A. Mastrotcinque, *Studi sulle Guerre Mitridatiche*, Stuttgart 1999, 77 n. 269, 78 n. 270.

**21** M. Laffranque, *Poseidonios historien. Un épisode significatif de la première guerre de Mithridate*, *Pallas* 11, 1962, 103–113, 105 already noted, albeit briefly, the differences in the information provided by Athenaeus concerning Athenion's government. She describes in detail his rise to power, while the final part of his mandate occupies very little space, proving that Athenaeus' transmission of Posidonius is not literal, but is actually a re-elaboration, which lost part of the text. This hypothesis has been expanded by Bugh (n. 20) 119. On the other hand, new inscription evidence from ID 2045 and 2255 have led some authors to argue the possibility that Athenion

First, we must have in mind that Posidonius' portrayal of Athenion is completely out-of-proportion<sup>22</sup>. It is cruel and unreliable and written with different motivations. Posidonius was a Stoic and his work possibly followed those distorting biographies belonging to the Stoic tradition<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, the text has to be treated with extreme caution. For example, Athenion's arrival in Athens follows a pattern of well known literary clichés with a description of his humble origins and his 'fake' Athenian citizenship<sup>24</sup>. This information contradicts other evidence relating to Athenian Ephebeia at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC.<sup>25</sup> The institution included foreigners, giving them access to Athenian citizenship, a process that grew throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, it seems probable that Athenian citizenship was not out of Athenion's reach in spite of Posidonius' attempt to discredit him. Similarly, Athenion's arrival in Athens can be compared to the arrivals of other infamous historical characters: for example, Alcibiades and Demetrius Poliorcetes who were both responsible for important events in Athens' past<sup>27</sup>. To this effect, it is important to consider the chronology of Athenion's appearance in Athens. It was in the year of *anarchia*, 88/7 BC. Although his journey from Pontus to Athens must have taken place during the navigation season, starting

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changed his name to Aristion, although the hypothesis has also been refuted: cft. L. Ballesteros Pastor, *Mitridates Eupátor, Rey del Ponto*, Granada 1996, 128.

**22** A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, Cambridge 1971, 33 considers that Posidonius' text is „the most hostile image of a popular leader in Greek literature“.

**23** As was the case with Persaios of Kition: cft. J. Bollansée, *Persaios of Kition, or the Failure of the Wise Man as General*, in: L. Moeren (ed.), *Politics, Administration and Society in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, Leuven 2000, 15–28, esp. at 22–23. In the ancient sources, Persaios and Athenion share similar humble or servile backgrounds: Persaios: *ibid.*, 27–28; Athenion: L. Ballesteros Pastor, *Atenión, Tirano de Atenas*, SHHA 23, 2005, 385–400, 387.

**24** Posidonius describes Athenion as the son – probably illegitimate – of a prostitute slave of Egyptian origin, reflecting a known literary resource in Athenian political rhetoric, traced back to the Classical period: K. Bringmann, *The King as Benefactor: Some Remarks on Ideal Kingship in the Age of Hellenism*, in: Bulloch et al. (n. 17) 156–157. On the notion of illegitimacy in Ancient Greece, vid. D. M. Mac Dowell, *Bastards as Athenian Citizens*, CQ 26, 1976, 88–91; P. J. Rhodes, *Bastards as Athenian Citizens*, CQ 28, 1978, 89–92; P. Carlier, *Observations sur les nothoi*, in: R. Lonis (ed.), *L'Etranger dans le monde grec II*, Nancy 1992, 107–125. As the son of an Egyptian, Athenion would have also been considered a Barbarian, at least to a certain degree. Therefore, Posidonius' portrayal must also be interpreted in this light, framed into the themes associated to this view: vid. R. Hodot, *Le vice, c'est les autres*, in: Lonis (n. 24) 169–183.

**25** S. Dow, *Greek Inscriptions*, *Hesperia* 4, 1935, 5–90, 81.

**26** Candiloro (n. 6) 169–170.

**27** Alcibiades: Xen. *hell.* 1.4.13–21; Demetrius Poliorcetes: Plut. *Demetr.* 8–10, 10.1; Diod. XX, 45–46. Vid. Ballesteros Pastor (n. 23) 390 and n. 24–25. In another instance, the narration of his detour to Carystus, could be referencing the Persian landing during the Graeco-Persian Wars: Hdt. VI, 99.

around mid-April, the elections<sup>28</sup> for Eponymous Archon would not have taken place until the summer. Therefore, he must have arrived in Athens sometime in the month of July of the year 88 BC<sup>29</sup>.

At his arrival to Athens, Athenion judges the situation of the city as an *anarchia*. Nevertheless, Athenion's use of the term *anarchia* was not figurative as in describing a state of chaos. It seems to be describing a permanent state of affairs: i. e. the absence of an Eponymous Archon in Athens for year 88/7. This can be seen in the list of Archons where *anarchia* appears mentioned for that year<sup>30</sup>. C. Habicht offers an interesting suggestion claiming that Mithridates held the Archonship of 88/7. This possibility has found widespread support among scholars<sup>31</sup>. However, Athenion could not mention anarchy if the Pontic king was indeed holding this office. Nevertheless, *anarchia* specifically refers to the absence of Archon. Other authors have maintained that there may have been a proclamation of *damnatio memoria* against Medeios of Piraeus who, potentially, would have been Archon in 88/7. His name could have subsequently been erased from the list of Archons by the Mithridatic government at the time of the Athenian siege by Sulla<sup>32</sup>. Nevertheless, the epigraphic evidence suggests the lack of Archon as a real fact. As S. Dow has pointed out, the stone containing the list of Archons did not have enough space for a name to be inscribed<sup>33</sup>. Therefore, the existence of a technical *anarchia* (i. e., the absence of an eponymous Archon) remains the most plausible conclusion.

Links between Medeios and the Athenian pro-Roman faction are recorded in inscriptions for the 90s and maybe even before. Medeios appears as an Athenian ambassador during the Thespian games which honoured Rome<sup>34</sup>. It is possible that M. Aquillius<sup>35</sup>, Rome's ambassador to Pontus prior to the outbreak of the First Mithridatic War, would have visited Athens during the illegal Archonship of Medeios. Thus, direct contact between Medeios and Rome could very well

28 Aristot. Ath. pol. 8, 1; 22, 5; 55. J. Bleicken, *Die athenische Demokratie*, Paderborn 1994, 315.

29 *Contra*, F. de Callataÿ, *L'histoire des guerres mithridatiques vue par les monnaies*, Louvain-la-Neuve 1997, 296, n. 112, who considers that Athenion was already in office towards spring of 88.

30 IG II<sup>2</sup> 1713, ll. 12; 1714. On the concept of *anarchia* in the Athenian *politeia*, cft. Aristot. Ath. pol. 13, 1; Dow (n. 13) 146; Bugh (n. 20) 212 n. 30. H. B. Mattingly, *Some Third Magistrates in the Athenian New Style Silver Coinage*, JHS 91, 1971, 85–93, 87, revises the main theses explaining the reasons that led to the anarchy of 88/7 B. C. On the other hand, Candiloro (n. 6) 149 thinks that there is no real link between the anarchy appearing in epigraphy and the one mentioned by Athenion.

31 Ch. Habicht, *Zur Geschichte Athens zu der Mithridates VI*, Chiron 6, 1976, 127–142, 130.

32 S. V. Tracy, *TO MH DIS ARXEIN*, CPh 86, 1991, 202–204, 202 and n. 12.

33 Dow (n. 13) 144–145.

34 Following the interpretation of IG II2 1054 by S. Byrne, IG II2 1095 and the Delia of 98/97 B. C., ZPE 109, 1995, 55–61, 59.

35 On Aquillius, vid. Mastrocinque (n. 20) 47–57 with full bibliography.



have existed; moreover such support would have been Marian<sup>36</sup>. Dating Aquillius' journey is complicated and hinders the sequencing of events<sup>37</sup>. If his journey began in 90, then he would have arrived in Athens in that year. He would not have bypassed Pireius or Delos on his way to Asia Minor as both ports were strategically important for any eastern route<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, the visit of Aquillius and the beginning of Medeios' second Archonship could have coincided. However, it cannot be asserted that Medeios continued in office by the direct order of Rome. On the other hand, it is plausible to think that Aquillius, who was representing the Senate, would have favoured Medeios' continuity in charge, as far as he embodied the traditional pro-Roman Athenian aristocracy<sup>39</sup>. Athenion's reference to Aquillius' defeat<sup>40</sup> seems to confirm the relationship between the Roman senator and the situation in Athens. His words could well be referring to a connection between Aquillius' visit to Athens and Medeios' continued re-election.

It has been argued that the outbreak of events leading to the Athenian crisis at the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC was largely due to debt<sup>41</sup>, serving also as a main base for Mithridatic anti-Roman propaganda<sup>42</sup>. Even so, Medeios could not have been the only citizen with sufficient economical resources to run for public office<sup>43</sup>.

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**36** On the links between Aquillius and Marius, vid. Mastrocinque (n. 20) 25 and notes. 89 and 90, with bibliography; Glew (n. 14) 394.

**37** T. C. Brennan, Sulla's Career in the Nineties, *Chiron* 22, 1992, 102–158, 152–153 dates Aquillius' journey to 90 B. C.; *contra*, Glew (n. 14) 394, who defends that Aquillius left Rome in 89 B. C. For a complete revision of the chronology of the time, vid. A. N. Sherwin-White, Ariobarzanes, Mithridates and Sulla, *CQ* 27, 1977, 173–183, with bibliography; the author suggests in p. 176 and n. 16, that in 89, Aquillius had already restored Nicomedes and Ariobarzanes to their thrones, so it was possible for him to stop by Athens in 90 B. C.

**38** As deduced from the study of Habicht (n. 16).

**39** Vid. W. Z. Rubinson, Mithridates IV Eupator Dionysos and Rome's Conquest on the Hellenistic East, *MHR* 8, 1993, 20–22.

**40** As pointed out by M. C. Hoff, *Laceratae Athenae*: Sulla's Siege of Athens in 87/6 B. C. and its Aftermath, in: Hoff – Rotroff (n. 16) 34.

**41** Cft. Tracy (n. 5) 207.

**42** In favour of the traditional image of Hellenistic kings as *evergetes*: cft. Bringmann (n. 24). On the cancellation of debt used as political propaganda by Mithridates (i. e., App. Mithr. 48), even mentioned by Athenion in his speech, vid. Sarikakis (n. 17) at 261–263; Candiloro (n. 6) 141 and 148.

**43** MacKendrick (n. 15) 60–61 supports the hypothesis that the power wielded by Medeios and his circle emanated from their financial abilities as creditors, serving a good part of the impoverished population. Vid. *contra*, J. K. Davies, Review: P. Mackendrick, *The Athenian Aristocracy* 339 to 31 B. C., *CR* 23, 1973, 228–231, 229. MacKendrick's hypothesis was already briefly outlined by Laffranque (n. 21) 110; he pointed out several agents acting on the conflictive atmosphere of pre-Mithridatic Athens, more specifically, the links between Athenian supporters of Rome and



As a Delian merchant, his Roman links would have relied heavily on the Marian faction, especially among the Marian *negotiatores*. The latter became the object of unleashed violence during the Ephesian Vespers throughout the Eastern Mediterranean<sup>44</sup>. The key to the three-year illegal Archonship lies behind these links<sup>45</sup>. Athenion was reacting against a pro-Roman agent, Medeios<sup>46</sup>, clearly close to the Marians. If Medeios acted as Rome's representative in Athens, his disappearance would have left a power vacuum in the city's government. This could only be fulfilled by the Roman Senate (or Marian party). Such a situation could have contributed to Athenion's harsh resentment<sup>47</sup>, as his speech to the Athenians seems to show.

Moreover, the year of *anarchia* in Athens coincided with a political crisis in Rome caused by the Social War<sup>48</sup>, a fact that would have made difficult any senatorial intervention in Athens for that year. Athenion's speech which veered toward non-Roman involvement in the Athenian government, would have then gained coherence. These external factors, though, do not explain why the position of

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Roman knights and businessmen with interests in the city state, and especially, Delos. On the other hand, there was also a lack of candidates with sufficient financial resources, in order to take up office, ultimately leading to a state of *anarchia*; on the subject, vid. Dow (n. 13) 146; Geagan (n. 19) 17.

<sup>44</sup> Kallet-Marx (n. 1) 153–154.

<sup>45</sup> This triple Archonship has been sometimes considered, *de facto*, a tyranny: cft. Badian (n. 12) 107–108; A. Keaveney, Sulla. The Last Republican, London 1982, 79; Kallet-Marx (n. 1) 206.

<sup>46</sup> Badian (n. 12) 107–108. However, Badian's explanation, although brilliant, does not completely resolve complex problems of chronology.

<sup>47</sup> A. K. Schiller, Multiple Gentile Affiliations and the Athenian Response to Roman Domination, *Historia* 55, 2006, 264–284, 278 puts forth the possibility that the Romans directly liaised with the aristocratic group as a conscious way of regulating inter-state relations between Rome and Athens, which ultimately brought Medeios to the forefront of the Athenian economic aristocracy, since he acted as a mediator between Athens and Roman interests. Once he disappeared, Mithridates acted in a similar way as Rome, attempting to place his partisans in power. Mithridates' strategy of positioning tyrants in cities under his control responds to the very same aim. On Mithridatic tyrants, vid. Sarikakis (n. 17) 263.

<sup>48</sup> On Rome's economic problems and the measures taken to finance the war against the Italian allied forces, vid. Oros. V, 18.26–27; Plut. Pomp. 1; 4. Likewise, M. H. Crawford, Roman Republican Coinage, Cambridge 1974, 702–703; Callataÿ (n. 29) 281. On the other hand, Mithridates' actions in Asia only aggravated Rome's financial situation, since a considerable flow of taxes for Rome was cut off: C. T. Barlow, The Roman Government and the Economy, 92–80 B. C., *AJPh* 101, 1980, 202–219; F. Santangelo, Sulla, the Elites and the Empire. A Study of Roman Policies in Italy and the Greek East, Leiden – Boston 2007, 33. On Rome's political situation during the Mithridatic War in Greece and Sulla's political career, vid. B. R. Katz, The Siege of Rome in 87 B. C., *CPh* 71, 1976, 328–336 and more recently, A. Allély, La déclaration d'*Hostis* de 88 et les Douze Hostes, *REA* 109, 2007, 175–206.

the Eponymous Archon remained vacant. The most probable answer is given by E. Badian, who argued that Medeios had died after his last recorded Archonship of 89/8<sup>49</sup>.

A further factor to consider is Athenion's own motives. According to the available evidence, Athenion was sent as an ambassador to Mithridates. But it is illogical that Medeios and his followers, who had strong links with Rome, would have approved such a diplomatic mission. It is conceivable then that Athenion left for Pontus as a representative of a different group of interests in Athens. References to other figures close to Athenion and his government share similar socio-economic backgrounds. Athenion, Apellicon, the merchant Dies<sup>50</sup>, or even Aristion, who later became tyrant, were all foreigners that gained Athenian citizenship through the *Ephebeia*<sup>51</sup>. Likewise, they all came from families related to commerce in Delos and great fortunes were acquired before 89.

Once again, finance played its role. Medeios had represented the traditional Athenian aristocracy – strongly tied with religion<sup>52</sup> and enriched by Delian commerce. The new pro-Pontic authorities who tried to get control of Athens after Medeios death, seem to have originated from an international merchant class who had only recently been admitted to Athenian citizenship<sup>53</sup>. This commercial group also came into contact with the Roman *negotiatores* and merchants that had settled in Delos<sup>54</sup>; in fact they were competitors. Economic crisis at the turn of the century, widespread debt, and Medeios' illegal abuse of power, all served to express the process which led to power change in Athens. Nevertheless, the replacement of the Athenian government by the new pro-Pontic citizens was ultimately linked to commercial competition, as for as control of the Delian economy meant control over routes opening Asia to the rest of the Mediterranean. Hence, the political and economic fight involving these groups embedded

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<sup>49</sup> Badian (n. 12) 110 dates the death of Medeios to the beginning of his Archonship in 89/8.

<sup>50</sup> S. Dow, A Leader of the Anti-Roman Party in Athens in 88 BC, CPh 37, 1942, 311–314.

<sup>51</sup> On the expansion of the Athenian *Ephebeia* to include foreigners as of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. B. C., vid. Dow (n. 25) 81; L. d'Amore, *Ginasio e difesa civica nelle Poleis d'Asia Minore* (IV–I sec. A. C.), REA 109, 2007, 147–173, 164–166.

<sup>52</sup> Schiller (n. 47) 266–268.

<sup>53</sup> F. Santangelo, With or Without You: Some Late Hellenistic Narratives, SCI 28, 2009, 57–78, 62 emphasizes the irony of having a 'fake citizen' – as described by Posidonius – send many worthy Athenian citizens on exile. Bringmann (n. 24) 156 has also pointed out the 'fake' nature of Athenion's citizenship. Nevertheless, if the modifications to the Athenian *Ephebeia* of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. did indeed take effect, then there would have been more men, who like Athenion, acquired Athenian citizenship, despite their foreign origins. Therefore Posidonius' assessment of Athenion as a 'fake citizen' only responds to the general denigration of his person throughout the text.

<sup>54</sup> Hasenohr (n. 16).

itself in the larger conflict between Rome and Mithridates. Up to this point, Athenian politics had remained strictly loyal to Rome<sup>55</sup>.

This historical setting can be further clarified by carefully examining Athenion's speech. His description of the Athenian state of affairs reveals a convenient use of exaggeration and rhetoric probably masking over the real, chaotic situation<sup>56</sup>. Most striking are the references to the closure of temples, the decline of gymnasiums and theatres and the silence placed on philosophical schools. Even if consideration were taken of the political crisis caused by *anarchia* and Roman intervention, it is hard to believe that such decadence existed. The responsibility attributed by Athenion's speech to the Roman Senate<sup>57</sup> also seems disproportionate.

In the first place, Athenion's speech talks about the closing of the temples. It is difficult to assess in what nature the senate's interest in Athenian politics would have affected religious life in the city, unless both were related. One clue, in this respect, is offered by Medeios himself, who served as the Eteoboutad priest of Poseidon Erechtheus<sup>58</sup>. His family were not only linked to commercial life in Delos<sup>59</sup>, but for generations had been particularly dedicated to keeping several leading priesthoods in the city. His sisters, Philippa and Laodameia also served as

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55 This hypothesis would explain to its full extent the affirmation in Cic. Brut. 306, where Philo, while head of the Academy, abandoned Athens during the Mithridatic War, together with the city's *optimates*: McGing (n. 10) 120. By using the term *optimates*, Cicero is referring to the traditional Athenian aristocracy, in such a way that the opposition with the new, commercial aristocracy becomes quite clear. Among those, who accompanied Philo, was Medeios, son of Medeios – the leader of the non-conventional triple Archonship. Medeios the younger returned to Athens with Sulla, as stated in Plut. Sull. 14.9. Voluntary or forced exile of the Athenian population during despotic governments must have been one more of the many clichés used by Posidonius in his description of Athenion's government: vid. C. Bearzot, Esilii, deportazioni, emigrazioni forzate in Atene sotto regimi non democratici, in: M. Sordi (ed.), Emigrazione e immigrazione nel mondo antico, Milan 1994, 141–167. On the loyalty of Athens to Rome, at least until the year of anarchy, viewed through coin iconography, vid. Mattingly (n. 30) 86. Finally, on the confrontation between both factions in the wider context of the conflict between Rome and Mithridates for the control of the Eastern Mediterranean, vid. A. Năco – B. Antela-Bernárdez – I. Arrayás Morales – S. Busquets-Artigas, The 'Ultimate Frontier': War, Terror and the Greek Poleis between Mithridates and Rome, in: O. Hekster – T. Kaizer (eds.), Frontiers in the Roman World, Leiden 2011, 291–304. Also, on the term *optimates*, see M. Robb, Beyond Populares and Optimates, Stuttgart 2011.

56 K. Reinhardt, Philosophy and History among the Greeks, G&R 1, 1954, 82–90, esp. 87–88.

57 On the Senate's management of Eastern affairs, cft. Kallet-Marx (n. 1) 162–177.

58 Schiller (n. 47) 267.

59 Cft. Candiloro (n. 6) 140.

Eteoboutad priestesses: the first for Athena Polias<sup>60</sup> and the second as *kanephoros*, both at the Delia and Apollonia<sup>61</sup>. This is the only known case for a single family, the Eteoboutadai, to hold the two main priesthoods in Athens<sup>62</sup>. Moreover, Medeios held up to five religious offices at one time. This fact highly stresses the unusual situation lived in Athens at the time.

If Medeios, as suggested, had died prior to the election of the Archonship in 88<sup>63</sup>, or even more, during the time he held the office, the temples would have been closed due to his death. Furthermore, his sisters might have been unable to perform their religious duties because of the potential contamination of their brother's dead body<sup>64</sup>. His death would have affected their roles as priestesses because the temple needed time and procedures in order to be purified.

The closure of theatres seems easier to explain. Cults to Demeter and Kore were strongly associated to the festivities of Dionysus which fell under the aegis of Medeios' family<sup>65</sup>. Mourning the death of Medeios would, therefore, have imposed the closure of religious spaces, including theatres, places closely related with the festivities in honour of Dionysus. The joy of Athenion's arrival would have contrasted vividly against the mourning. Furthermore, Dionysian artists played an important role in welcoming Athenion, receiving him as the ambassador of the new Dionysus, Mithridates<sup>66</sup>. The open support shown by this group<sup>67</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Cft. Plut. X orat. 843B. Vid. A. Hauvette-Besnault, *Prêtresses d'Athéné Poliade antérieures au premier siècle de notre ère*, BCH 3, 1879, 491; Tracy (n. 5) 227; Schiller (n. 47) 268. On the priestesses of Athena Polias, see D. M. Lewis, *Notes on Attic Inscriptions (II)*, ABSA 50, 1955, 1–36, esp. 7–12.

<sup>61</sup> ID 1869. Vid. J. D. Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, Berkeley 1998, 239–241.

<sup>62</sup> Schiller (n. 47) 271 and n. 42. Also, J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families 600–300 B. C.*, Oxford 1971, 349: „in the present case it can hardly be accidental that the two branches of the *genos* held the chief Athenian priesthoods of the two deities concerned in the famous dispute *περὶ τῆς χάρας*“.

<sup>63</sup> Badian (n. 12) 108.

<sup>64</sup> Vid. R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, Oxford 1983, 39.

<sup>65</sup> Schiller (n. 47) 266 and 282.

<sup>66</sup> Ath. V. 212 d–e; Cic. Flacc. 23. Vid. A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, Oxford 1988, 295. It was not uncommon for foreign military figures to be acclaimed in Athens with the title of 'New Dionysus', as evidenced by the examples of Alexander, Demetrius or Anthony: vid. J. H. Oliver, C. Sulpicius Galba, *Proconsul of Achaia*, AJA 46, 1942, 380–388, 383.

<sup>67</sup> Despite the good relations with Rome in the period prior to the crisis, as gauged from the available data. K. J. Rigsby, *Provincia Asia*, TAPhA 118, 1988, 123–153, 127–129, provides a different, yet comparable example, in which the loyalties of Dionysian artists in Asia were laid according to their expectations of gaining privileges from one faction or other. Likewise, vid. T. Tamura, *Les artistes dionysiaques et la première guerre de Mithridate*, in: T. Yuge – M. Doi (eds.), *Forms of Control and Subordination in Antiquity*, Leiden 1988, 168–173 and, more recently, S. Aneziri, *Die Vereine der dionysischen Techniten im Kontext der hellenistischen Gesellschaft*, Munich 2003.

towards Athenion, and probably also to the tyrant Aristion after Athenion disappeared, must have been motivated by the economic and institutional crisis in Athens. It endangered their cultural supremacy<sup>68</sup>.

Regarding the philosophical schools, they probably faced similar problems<sup>69</sup>. No existing evidence supports Athenion's claim to the closing of these schools<sup>70</sup>: although his speech could be interpreted as meaning 'decay' as opposed to 'closure'. Athens was involved in a general cultural crisis (probably closely linked with, and resulted from, the economic situation) and Athenion blamed Rome directly<sup>71</sup> for leaving Athens at a disadvantage in the competition to be the 'philosophical capital' of the Greek world<sup>72</sup>. Crisis and debt lingering over the Athenian population would no doubt have affected the resources of philosophical schools. Hence, the philosophical schools were optimal environments for the development of an anti-Roman faction<sup>73</sup>. Likewise, the shadow of the conflict between the Pontus and Rome in the Eastern Mediterranean motivated many leading Athenian philosophers, as Philo, to abandon their schools and flight to Rome in search of their own security<sup>74</sup>.

On the other hand, links between philosophy and Ephebeia are quite evident: since 123/2 BC, the Ephebeia appears related to philosophical institutions, in particular the Academy, and also the Lyceum, to which the Peripatetic Athenion was affiliated<sup>75</sup>. The 'silence' mentioned by Athenion must have directly affected the Athenian Ephebeia<sup>76</sup>, which, in turn, would explain the situation regarding the

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68 J. L. Ferrary, *Philhellénisme et impérialisme: aspects idéologiques de la conquête romaine du monde hellénistique, de la seconde guerre de Macédoine à la guerre contre Mithridate*, Rome 1988, 469–471.

69 The situation of Athens' philosophical schools was studied in detail by Ferrary (n. 68) 435–486. Candiloro (n. 6) 158–171 also provides a good analysis on the subject of Athenion's speech.

70 Cic. nat. deor. 1, 21, 59; Ferguson (n. 1) 440; Ferrary (n. 68) 443 and 446 n. 37. Likewise, Ch. Brittain, *Philo of Larissa. The Last of the Academic Sceptics*, Oxford 2001, 58–59. *Contra*, Badian (n. 12) 126 n. 46.

71 Vid. E. Gruen, *Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Roman Anxieties*, in: id., *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*, Leiden 1990, 158–192.

72 Ferrary (n. 68) 469–471.

73 Candiloro (n. 6) 158.

74 Candiloro (n. 6) 154.

75 Data seems to evidence quite the contrary: Ferrary (n. 68) 438–441. As clearly exposed by d'Amore (n. 51) 158, the Ephebeia became increasingly associated during the Hellenistic period with the education of future citizens, prioritizing morals and culture over military formation.

76 On the importance of the Ephebeia in crucial moments prior to the Mithridatic War, vid. Accame (n. 3) 167.

gymnasiums<sup>77</sup>. These played a significant role in the education of ephebes and thus also in military instruction<sup>78</sup>.

Athenion's speech fits perfectly into this context. He is describing either directly or metaphorically an Athenian reality of disorder and crisis, probably motivated by the disappearance of Medeios whilst still in office. R. Parker has brilliantly argued, from a Greek religious perspective, that civil conflict was usually associated with λοιμός<sup>79</sup>. If this is the case, Athenion's words could be interpreted as a declaration of religious contamination in Athens caused by political and religious issues (the repeated Archonship of Medeios and his relationship with Rome; and a break in the succession of tribes in priestly cycles<sup>80</sup>). The death of Medeios would definitely have caused the attempt of changing the situation. As both Archon and priest of Poseidon Erechtheus, the illegal condition of one office corrupted the other thus endangering the religious well-being of the community<sup>81</sup>. Athenion's words were probably aimed to confirm this belief in his fellow citizens, although the irrational elements in this kind of religious procedure were probably not evident to most of the population<sup>82</sup>.

Athenion managed to be elected στρατηγὸς ἐπὶ τὰ ὅπλα<sup>83</sup>, an office of increasing importance in Athenian politics during the Late Hellenistic times. As Geagan has shown, the name of a 'Hoplite General' could be used side by side with that of an Archon as Eponymous<sup>84</sup>. Athenion's speech, as preserved in Athenaeus,

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**77** Nevertheless, a dedication (ID 1930) to Medeios the Younger (i. e. Medeios II, son of Medeios), dated to the Archonship of Sositheos, son of Sosipatros, implies the existence of close links between Medeios and the Athenian gymnasiums: Cft. J. Marcadé, *Chapiteaux circulaires et chapiteaux doriques de colonnes votives déliennes*, BCH 98, 1974, 299–331, 324–325; E. Culasso Gastaldi, *La ginnasiarchia ad Atene. Istituzioni, ruoli e personaggi dal IV sec. all' età ellenistica*, in: O. Curty (ed.), *L'huile et l'argent. Gymnasiarchie et évergétisme dans la Grèce hellénistique*, Paris 2009, 115–142, 126 n. 43 and 132; J. Verdejo Manchado – B. Antela-Bernárdez, *Medeios at the Gym*, ZPE 186, 2013, 134–140.

**78** P. Vidal-Naquet, *Le chasseur noir. Formes de pensée et formes de société dans le monde grec*, Paris 1981, 144 interestingly pointed out the anti-hoplite nature of an ephebe; nevertheless the gymnasiums were fundamental centres for the military training of young Athenians. Vid. M. B. Hatzopoulos, *La formation militaire dans les gymnases hellénistiques*, in: D. Kah – P. Scholz (eds.), *Das hellenistische Gymnasium*, Berlin 2004, 91–96; and S. V. Tracy, *Reflections on the Athenian Ephebeia in the Hellenistic Age*, in: *ibid.*, 207–210.

**79** Parker (n. 64) 257.

**80** W. B. Dinsmoor, *The Archons of Athens in the Hellenistic World*, Cambridge, Mass. 1931, 281.

**81** Vid., for example, Hom. Od. XIX, 109–114; Hes. erg. 225–47. Cft. Parker (n. 64) 265.

**82** Parker (n. 64) 267.

**83** The main work of reference continues to be Th. Sarikakis, *The Hoplite General in Athens*, Chicago 1976.

**84** Geagan (n. 19) 18–19.

stressed the lack of an Archon. Perhaps he wanted to present himself as a new alternative to the Athenian government. The previous Archon Medeios had led the city into a crisis, so Athenion would thus have tried to disassociate himself from the previous government, obtaining an office different than the Archonship.

In addition, Athenaeus' description of Athenion's government fits the nature and role of a Hoplite General<sup>85</sup>. As far as we know, Hoplite Generals existed in Athens since the Classical period<sup>86</sup>. But, there is little information surviving before 300 BC. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onwards more powers were attributed to the magistracy, but certain restrictions applied to Athenian political personalities<sup>87</sup>. Their importance is reflected in IG II 2336, which lists the names of the Hoplite Generals following those of the Eponymous Archons<sup>88</sup>. Furthermore, Philostratus maintains that both the Archon and the Hoplite General were the main magistracies in Athenian politics<sup>89</sup>. From the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC onwards, a Hoplite General was responsible for defending the frontiers, directing military service from the ephebes, and controlling public order and urban security forces. In Athens and Piraeus, other responsibilities may have included corn supply management, the supervision of markets and shipping, and other civic duties<sup>90</sup>.

Certainly, some similarities can be observed between Athenaeus' account and Athenion's activities and the powers of a Hoplite General. For example, Athenion was elected Hoplite General in the theatre, one of the known places for such an election<sup>91</sup>.

Regarding the deeds of Athenion and the constitution of his frequently called ‚reign of terror‘, Athenaeus assures that „he [Athenion] placed sentinels at the gates, so that many of the Athenians, fearing what he might be going to do, let themselves down over the walls by night, and so fled away. And Athenion sending some horsemen to pursue them slew some of them, and brought back some in chains, having a number of bodyguards about his person of the kind called cat-

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**85** Geagan (n. 19) 19. Some discussion on the nature and functioning of the college of the *strategoí* can be found in D. Hamel, Athenian Generals. Military Authority in the Classical Period, Brill 1998, 194–195, with full bibliography.

**86** Aristot. Ath. pol. 61.1. Likewise, vid. P. J. Rhodes, A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia, Oxford 1981, 678–679. On the initial roles of the Hoplite General, vid. E. L. Wheeler, The General as Hoplite, in: V. D. Hanson, Hoplitai. The Classical Greek Battle Experience, London 1991, 121–170, esp. 147–152.

**87** J. G. Oliver, War, Food and Politics in Early Hellenistic Athens, Oxford 2007, 163.

**88** Geagan (n. 19) 10; Tracy (n. 5) 215.

**89** Philostr. soph. II, 20, 103.

**90** Plut. mor. 736D; I. G., II<sup>2</sup>, 1039; I. G. II<sup>2</sup>, 3500; Geagan (n. 19) 23–27.

**91** Geagan (n. 19) 19.



aphracts. And often he convened assemblies, pretending great attachment to the side of the Romans [...] and bringing accusations against many as having kept up communications with the exiles, and aiming at a revolution, he put them to death. And he placed thirty guards at each gate, and would not allow anyone to go either in or out<sup>92</sup>. No other office than the Hoplite General would have been in charge of keeping sentinels at the city gates, pursuing fugitives, placing suspects on trial and controlling public order. The text seems to state that Athenion actually imposed a state of emergency and martial law in Athens<sup>93</sup>. Of course, the support of the ephebes would have been fundamental in such a case.

After the analysis showed above, it appears quite difficult to conciliate the usual view of Athenion, resulted from the account of Posidonius surviving in Athenaeus, and Athenion's decisions and government, especially in relation with the known attempt to restore democracy during this period. In all probability, the main obstacle Athenion had to face in his attempt to restore democracy was the opposition from the wealthy class of Athenian aristocrats who were allied to successful merchants linked to the Delian market. In the 90s BC these merchants acted as creditors to a good part of the Athenian population. As a Hoplite General, Athenion controlled some of the commercial traffic passing through Piraeus. This had direct consequences for the business dealing of the rich merchant class. Athenaeus seems to be referring to this new power when he says that Athenion „seized on the property of many of the people, and collected such a quantity of money as to fill several wells“<sup>94</sup>.

As far as we know, up until Medeios' disappearance, Athenian rulers tried to bring Romans and Italians into their policies, especially *negotiatores* and merchants connected to trading interests in Delos<sup>95</sup>. After the crisis of the late

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<sup>92</sup> Athen. V, 214b–c (D. Young, translator. 1954).

<sup>93</sup> Athen. V, 214d: „and he caused proclamation to be made, that all must be in their houses by sunset, and that no one should presume to walk outside with a lantern-bearer“. The after-sunset curfew clearly indicates the enforcement of martial law.

<sup>94</sup> Athen. V, 214c. On this conflict between the old and the new elite groups in Athens, cf. B. Antela-Bernárdez, *Élites viejas y nuevas en Atenas en el preludio de la I Guerra Mitridática*, in: O. Olesti – J. Cortadella – I. Arrayás (eds.), *Lo viejo y lo nuevo en la Historia Antigua*, Besançon 2015 [in print].

<sup>95</sup> Tracy (n. 7) 179. However, it must be stressed, as Tracy masterly remarks in 179–180 that „nearly every Athenian shared to some extent in the prosperity created by the port of Delos and concurred to some degree with a policy of cooperation, if not outright accommodation [with Rome]“. Cooperation was certainly taking place as of 130 B. C.; the growing prosperity of Delos directly benefited Athens until 110 B. C., when the importance of Puteoli as a main port of trade grew (or maybe even since 100 B. C., when the slave revolt put Athens in economic difficulties). After that date, the economic and social situation in Athens changed, and Athenians began to search for new alliances and to widen their political scope, in order to solve their critical situation.

2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC, prosperity decreased and debts impoverished many Athenians. Athenion's policy was based on supporting the poorest citizens. Fuelled by his Peripatetic background, his aim was to establish a new democratic constitution that would reward the lower social classes with active participation in the Athenian government. This was the first step in a much wider political plan, supported by Mithridates to resolve the social, economic and cultural problems in the city and to restore it to its glorious past.

According to the extant evidences, the Athenian indebtment was caused by the intervention of merchant and Roman *negotiatores* in the Athenian and Delian economies. Hence, Athenion's control over the commercial market was directed against the power of the merchants. Athenaeus states that the people that lost their properties were the members of the merchant class. It is right to surmise that Athenion, in his authority as Hoplite General, took advantage to prosecute illegal commercial abuses which he deemed were responsible for Athens' demise.

With Athenion at the helm, he placed his supporters in important political positions similarly as a tyrant would. Indeed, according to a text inscribed in *Agora I* 2351, a constitutional reform of Aristotelian influence was passed establishing extreme democracy<sup>96</sup>. A constitutional reform could explain the reason why Athenion's followers were elected to their charges beyond the usual period of elections. However, as far as there is no mention of Athenion's name in the text of *Agora I* 2351, it is possible the reform had begun some time before his arrival or that it was even a possible cause for his return to Athens. If the reform was approved beforehand, then it might have conditioned the way how he was elected into office, i. e. after delivering his speech he was acclaimed by the tribune of Roman orators in front of the Stoa of Attalos. On the other hand, had the reform been passed after Athenion's arrival, then as part of the Peripatetic school, he would have played an important part in its promotion, although there is no mention of him in the inscription. However, some aspects still need consideration. First, the continuity among the magistrates of 88/7 BC<sup>97</sup> of persons linked with the previous government. For example, various inscriptions show the *basileus* archon, Oinophilos, as related to Medeios. But the existence of a possible link between Athenion's government and the traditional aristocracy means several difficulties for modern interpretation<sup>98</sup>. If

<sup>96</sup> J. H. Oliver, A Peripatetic Constitution, JHS 100, 1980, 199–201; B. Antela-Bernárdez, Between Medeios and Mithridates: The Peripatetic Constitution of Athens in 88 B. C., ZPE 171, 2009, 105–108.

<sup>97</sup> IG II<sup>2</sup> 1714.

<sup>98</sup> The identification is based on IG II<sup>2</sup>, 1713 col. II: cft. Bringmann (n. 24) 147. Nevertheless, this inscription has often been dated to a much later period, to that of Augustus, instead of Mithridatic times. Vid. J. S. Trail, Greek Inscriptions from the Athenian Agora: Addenda to the

Oinophilos was elected *basileus* archon in 88/7, it could imply the existence of some kind of links between the government of Medeios and that of Athenion, although the support by Athenion of Oinophilos for the charge may not have been necessary<sup>99</sup>. In any case the archons of 88/7, including Oinophilos, would have taken up office before Athenion's arrival<sup>100</sup>. Furthermore, it seems clear that certain men in Athenion's circle have held important roles in previous Athenian government, as the case of Apellicon of Teos, Athenion's close collaborator seems to stress. It is also interesting to point out that Lucius Cornelius Sulla pardoned some of the members of the government in 88<sup>101</sup>, a fact that perhaps indicates, in the first place, that Athenion's men were different from Aristion's future governmental staff, and secondly, that the good relationship with Rome was maintained or at least not broken during Athenion's time. The question then is how did Medeios' close men like Oinophilos coexist with Athenion's henchmen, Dies and Apellicon. This coexistence may explain why Posidonius considered how Athenion took power in Athens and became a tyrant. Both groups probably confronted each other over various issues creating an atmosphere of conflict. Athenion's success over the aristocratic group of Medeios would have motivated Posidonius' remarks. Nevertheless, they would have mutually dealt with issues of the Athenian crisis thus suggesting a joint government<sup>102</sup>. Therefore, far from signifying a revolution, Athenion's government actually guaranteed continuity<sup>103</sup>.

From a wide scope, Athenion may have appeared as the main protagonist of political change in Athens, perhaps explaining the tyrannical label levelled against him. His charisma probably set him apart in history as Athens' leader of his time, perhaps giving him the appearance of a tyrant<sup>104</sup>. He was clearly a

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Athenian Agora, Vol. XV, Inscriptions: The Athenian Councillors, *Hesperia* 47, 1978, 269–331, 301; G. C. R. Schmalz, *Augustan and Julio-Claudian Athens*, Leiden 2009, 293.

<sup>99</sup> Baslez (n. 15) 52 considers these men to be followers of Athenion, and not Medeus, because of their commercial links in Delos. The proposal lacks any validity, since, as noted above, Medeus himself was a notable figure of Delian commerce.

<sup>100</sup> Since Athenion mentions *anarchia* in his speech, i. e. no Eponymous Archon, it would imply that an Archon was already in office.

<sup>101</sup> Badian (n. 12) 113; Ballesteros Pastor (n. 23) 393.

<sup>102</sup> McGing (n. 10) 120: „In the beginning the upper classes in Athens, or at least part of them, were willing to go along with Athenion“.

<sup>103</sup> In fact, the safe and respectable position of Oinophilos' daughter, Kleokrateia, who was priestess of Demeter and Kore about mid-century, shows that those who were involved in the government of Athenion, or at least those who were in charge during Athenion's rule, were not implicated as guilty by the Roman authority. Cft. MacKendrick (n. 15) 64.

<sup>104</sup> F. J. Gómez Espelosín, *La Manipulación de las masas como arma política en el mundo helenístico*, *Revista de Estudios Políticos* 45, 1985, 165–176, 165 and 169–170.

demagogue in the eyes of the aristocracy having based his authority on popular support. Power points to tyranny, and Athenion possessed it. Nevertheless, it is much more interesting to hypothesize on Athenion's own perspective. Athenion was essentially a philosopher who, as indicated in *Agora* I 2351, rose to power and led a government related to the Aristotelian extreme democracy. In order to understand Athenion as a politician, it is fundamental to understand Peripatetic philosophy. Jordovic demonstrates the relationship between tyranny and Aristotelian extreme democracy<sup>105</sup>. He describes different categories defining for this kind of democracy including the rise of prominent individuals<sup>106</sup>. According to Posidonius, Athenion's political behaviour follows these tendencies. Also, Posidonius sought to discredit, not only Athenion's extreme democracy, but also his Peripatetic political theory. In Posidonius' opinion, anything outside of Roman regulations, or as in this case, that caused conflict with Rome, he considered tyrannical. His presentation of the events is more philosophical and exemplary than historical and he portrays Athenion as disastrous: the 'bad' or 'wrong' philosopher<sup>107</sup>. *Contra* Posidonius, we must bear in mind that Aristotle's idea of political science is more a practical science than a theoretical one, not only addressed to philosophers, but to men engaged in politics<sup>108</sup>. Therefore, this fits well in Athenion's political activities, especially Aristotelian extreme democracy of *Agora* I 2351<sup>109</sup>.

The sources reveal that Athenion's disappearance seems to be related to Athenian control of Delos<sup>110</sup>. At some point, Athenion sent Apellicon to take Delos by force<sup>111</sup>. He was subsequently repelled<sup>112</sup>. Some time after, but we do not know exactly how much, Delos finally succumbed to the Pontic forces of Archelaus. After plundering Apollo's temple<sup>113</sup>, he journeyed to Athens to impose Aristion as

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**105** I. Jordovic, Aristotle on Extreme Tyranny and Extreme Democracy, *Historia* 60, 2011, 36–64, esp. at 38–39.

**106** Jordovic (n. 105) 40–42.

**107** Reinhardt (n. 56) 87–88.

**108** C. Lord, Politics and Philosophy in Aristotle's Politics, *Hermes* 106, 1978, 336–357, 337.

**109** Santangelo (n. 53) 64 has stressed the opposition between Athenion's will to exercise restraint and his search for good sense, as a follower of Aristotle. This struggle, of course, also featured in Posidonius' critical portrait of Athenion, framed by his desire to attack the philosophical schools, as a rival follower of the Stoa.

**110** P. Roussel, *Délos, Colonie Athenienne*, Paris 1916, 317–335; Ph. Bruneau, *Contributions à l'histoire urbaine de Délos*, BCH 92, 1968, 671–673, with a compilation of the literary sources mentioning these events.

**111** Cft. Antela-Bernárdez (n. 96) 105–108.

**112** Athen. V, 215a.

**113** The relationship between Mithridates and religion on the island of Delos stretched far back in time, as evidenced by the statues dedicated to the king of Pontus: L. Ballesteros Pastor, Los

tyrant and to reinforce his troops in Piraeus. From here he saw Sulla's siege of the city<sup>114</sup>. Archelaus must have arrived in Athens toward the end of the navigation season, around October 88 BC<sup>115</sup>. Aristion's tyranny lasted for around seventeen months after that<sup>116</sup>, what would mean that it started c. October 88<sup>117</sup>. Therefore, Athenion's government must have been in power in the short period between the summer and the beginning of the autumn season: a very short time in a complex chapter of Athenian history<sup>118</sup>.

Apellicon's mission to Delos deserves special attention here. According to the sources, its principal aim was to capture Apollo's treasure. So, why would the Athenians unleash a military attack on an island that was theirs? The management of certain resources were included in the Hoplite General's responsibilities. Therefore, Athenion's intentions in taking Delos were not considered *a priori* illegal<sup>119</sup>. To this effect, the sources point to a food shortage in Athens<sup>120</sup>. On the other hand, Delos stored large amounts of grain, enough to help the suffering Athenians<sup>121</sup>. Delos, then, needed to be captured. But, despite some initial

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cultos de Mitrídates Eupátor en Delos: Una propuesta de interpretación, *Habis* 37, 2006, 209–216; D. Burcu Erciyas, *Wealth, Aristocracy and Royal Propaganda under the Hellenistic Kingdoms of the Mithridatids*, Leiden 2006, 134–146.

**114** The sequence of events may be followed in the preserved sources. The first information is given in *Athen. V*, 214d–e, describing Apellicon's mission and Orobios' resistance. After the latter's victory, there are no more references to Athenion or Apellicon. *App. Mithr.* 28 narrates a second invasion of Delos, this time at the hands of Archelaus, Mithridates' general. The siege ended with disastrous consequences, leaving behind a desolate wake of destruction. On the other hand, A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East*, London 1984, 127–130, Callataÿ (n. 29) 295 have suggested that Mithridates took advantage of dissension among factions in Rome in 88 to send an expeditionary force to Greece under the command of Archelaus: *Liv. per.* 78; *App. Mithr.* 4, 27; *Eutr.* 5, 6.1; *Oros.* 4, 2, 4. Cft. McGing (n. 10) 121–123.

**115** Badian (n. 12) 110 already suggested that the occupation of Athens by Archelaus must have taken place near the end of the year.

**116** Laffranque (n. 21) 106 n. 10.

**117** *Plut. Sull.* 14, 7.

**118** U. Wilcken, s. v. Athenion 3, in: *RE* II.2, 1896, 2038f. already noted that one of the main characteristics of Athenion's government was precisely its short duration, perhaps only a few weeks.

**119** Baslez (n. 15) 52 and n. 10.

**120** Cft. n. 6 (*supra*).

**121** Cl. Nicolet, *Les rogateurs de la loi*, in: Dumont – Ferrary – Moreau – Nicolet (n. 7) 97 mentions the great quantities of cereal destined for Rome that were accumulated in Delos, as gauged from the 58 B. C. law. At this date, the island's commercial clout in the area had already decreased considerably, so it is more than probable that in the period preceding its definite downfall, accumulations of grain were also significant.

success, the enterprise failed due to the intervention of the Roman general, Orobios<sup>122</sup>, who defeated Apellicon<sup>123</sup>. Thus, to reach a satisfactory conclusion, it is important to establish a chronology of events. After the failed Athenian attack, Delos succumbed to a harsh siege from Archelaus and his Pontic forces<sup>124</sup>. In sum, the failed first attack was led by Apellicon representing Athenion; the second successful assault was perpetrated by the Pontic general Archelaus who imposed Aristion's rule on Athens after his victory<sup>125</sup>.

The next aspect to consider is Athenion's motive. As a Hoplite General, he may have commanded the right to control markets and resources in Delos, but the action would certainly have meant a flagrant break of peace and alliance treaties with Rome, since the Roman presence in Delos was strong. Apellicon's disaster, thus, can be seen from the resistance meted out on the island by Italian and Roman residents. But the interplay between politics, resistance, economy and commerce between Athens and Delos must not be forgotten. When comparing the sources for the attack on Delos and Athenion's government – from Posidonius' account – one wonders about food rationing imposed on Athens. The causes for such a measure are unknown, but food shortage, particularly grain, was usually associated with war: in this case, the Roman governor in Macedonia against Pontic forces. Therefore, Apellicon's mission to Delos was more likely destined to acquire grain, rather than the temple's riches. As Delos was under Athenian jurisdiction, the authority of the στρατηγὸς ἐπὶ τὰ ὅπλα applied to it too. Regardless, Posidonius clearly avoids mentioning Apellicon's attack for the need for food. Instead he emphasises the sacrilegious looting of Apollo's temple: impiety was, in fact, a defining characteristic of tyrants. Portrayed as an aggressor of the gods, Athenion's image is once again tarnished to the point where the real historical

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**122** F. Durrbach, *Choix d'inscriptions de Délos*, Paris 1921, 235–236 has rendered Mommsen's hypothesis invalid, who identified the Orobios mentioned by Posidonius with an Italian merchant settled in Delos. Durbach proposes that Orobios was actually a Roman praetor in command of a roving fleet in the area. Cft. J. Day, *An Economic History of Athens under Roman Domination*, New York 1942, 115, n. 363. Nevertheless, the most interesting hypothesis is offered by Baslez (n. 15) 54, who suggests that Orobios was indeed a merchant that took up arms to defend his assets and spheres of influence. Yet, it might be possible that Orobios were actually a *custodes*, linked in some way to the protection of the warehouses in Delos, for, as pointed out by Bugh (n. 20) 110 n. 4, there is no testimony to events actually taking place at sea, much to the contrary, all seem to be located on the island.

**123** Ferguson (n. 1) 444–446; W. Peel, *Griechische Vers-Inschriften*, Berlin 1955, no. 35; W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, vol. IV, Berkeley 1974, 235; Baslez (n. 15) 53–57.

**124** Athen. V, 215B.

**125** App. Mithr. 29.

events are still confused as a consequence of the intentional portrait of Posidonius' account and the absence of any other source to contrast our information.

So, one must ask why Mithridates did not act as an *evergetes* would do<sup>126</sup>, supplying the city, if indeed the city suffered food shortage due to the war. This might be a reason why Athens did not support the Mithridatic cause. Had Athens sided with Mithridates, he would have come to its aid and secured its control. Nevertheless, no Pontic initiative took place until the city failed to take Delos. Therefore, as has always been explained, Archeleus' action was probably more opportunistic than supportive of the known 'pro-Pontic agent', Aristion.

In conclusion, Athenion of Athens can be understood not necessarily as a tyrant, but as a complex politician in complex world. Despite the conflictive times, no conclusive evidence exists to support that his actions were motivated by hostility to Rome<sup>127</sup>.

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**126** After the conquest of Asia, Mithridates came to possess great riches: Callataÿ (n. 29) 288: „Aussi peut-on tenir pour acquis que le roi du Pont s'est retrouvé dès l'hiver 89/8 dans une situation d'abondance susceptible de financer tous ses projets“.

**127** van Berneden (n. 18) 154; Kallet-Marx (n. 1) 209.