



[Author] Demosthenes (384-322 BC)

[Work] *In Midiam* 10

[Place of work] Athens

[Typology] Literary Testimonies

[Period] 400–350 BC

[Text] Εὐήγορος εἶπεν· ὅταν ἡ πομπὴ ᾗ τῷ Διονύσῳ ἐν Πειραιεῖ καὶ οἱ κωμῳδοὶ καὶ οἱ τραγωδοὶ, καὶ <ἡ> ἐπὶ Ληναίῳ πομπὴ καὶ οἱ τραγωδοὶ καὶ οἱ κωμῳδοὶ, καὶ τοῖς ἐν ἄστει Διονυσίοις ἡ πομπὴ καὶ οἱ παῖδες καὶ ὁ κῶμος καὶ οἱ κωμῳδοί, καὶ Θαργηλίων τῇ πομπῇ καὶ τῷ ἀγῶνι, μὴ ἐξεῖναι μήτε ἐνεχυράσαι μήτε λαμβάνειν ἕτερον ἑτέρου, μηδὲ τῶν ὑπερημέρων, ἐν ταύταις ταῖς ἡμέραις, ἐὰν δέ τις τούτων τι παραβαίνει, ὑπόδικος ἔστω τῷ παρόνθι, καὶ προβολαὶ αὐτοῦ ἔστωσαν ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τῇ ἐν Διονύσου ὡς ἀδικοῦντος, καθὰ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἀδικοῦντων γέγραπται.

[Translation] Euegorus proposed that, on the occasion of the procession in honor of Dionysus in Peiraeus with the comedies and tragedies, the procession at the Lenaeum with the comedies and tragedies, the procession at the City Dionysia with the boys' contests and the revel and the comedies and tragedies. and also at the procession and contest of the Thargelia, it shall not be lawful on those days to distraint or to seize any debtors' property, even if they are defaulters. If anyone transgresses any of these regulations, he shall be liable to prosecution by the aggrieved party, and public complaints against him as an offender may be lodged at the meeting of the Assembly in the temple of Dionysus, as is provided by statute in the case of other offenders. (trans. A.T. Murray)

[Comment] In the speech *Against Meidias*—never actually delivered in court, as Demosthenes ultimately accepted a settlement of thirty minas offered by his long-standing adversary—the orator denounces the impiety and repeated violations of Athenian law committed by his wealthy, arrogant, and overbearing fellow citizen, who had, according to Demosthenes, repeatedly transgressed both divine norms and civic statutes. Among the infractions attributed to Meidias, Demosthenes includes a breach of the law of Euegorus, which prohibited the seizure (ἐνεχυράσαι) or confiscation (λαμβάνειν ἕτερον ἑτέρου) of property from insolvent debtors during the celebration of the Dionysia, Lenaea, and Targeliae (see Manieri 2015, 61). Such a law was necessary because creditors might use the occasion of public festivals to track down debtors who were otherwise difficult to locate, thereby disrupting audiences engaged in watching dramatic performances or choral dances. Worse still, without such legal protection, debtors wishing to participate in the communal celebrations risked having their property confiscated in their absence. The law of Euegorus thus safeguarded the right of all citizens—including debtors—to take part in religious spectacles. It also reflects the civic humanity and religious sensitivity of the Athenians, who, as we learn from another speech by Demosthenes (*Against Androtion*, 68), even granted prisoners temporary release during festivals, though some of them reportedly used the opportunity to escape (cf. Pickard-Cambridge 1996, 82–83). The importance of the Thargelia within the Athenian religious calendar is underscored by the fact that Euegorus' law, as cited by Demosthenes, lists it alongside the renowned Dionysia and Lenaia, suggesting that the Thargelia, too, enjoyed a similarly high degree of religious solemnity. Although the precise date of the law remains unknown, it was certainly enacted after the law on *prolabai*, which is mentioned later in the same speech. What is certain, however, is that if—as widely believed—the mid-4th-century BCE funerary inscription bearing the name Euegorus refers to the same individual, the law in question must have been passed during the first half of the 4th century BCE (see MacDowell 1990, 230–231).

[Reference edition] M.L. DILTS, *Demosthenis Orationes* vol. 2.1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005.

[Essential bibliography] D.M. MACDOWELL, *Demosthenes, Against Meidias (Oration 21)*, Oxford 1990; A. MANIERI, 'Le Targelie ateniesi nei lessicografi antichi', *RFCI*, 143, (1), 2015, 61-75; A.W. PICKARD- M.A. CAMBRIDGE, *Le feste drammatiche di Atene*, (trad. it.), Firenze 1996 (Oxford 1968).

[Keywords] Dionysia; law of Euegorus; Lenaia; Thargelia.

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