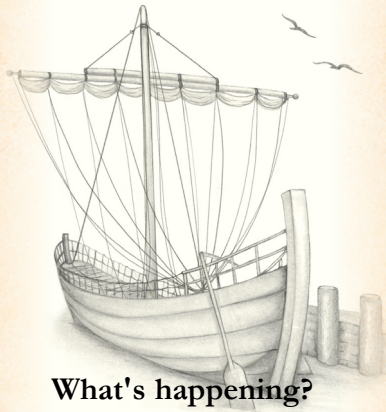




# Historically Speaking

Volume 4, Number 1 January 2025

## Calendars



### What's happening?

The craft fairs are done for us this year. We did well at both University High School and Ridgeline High School craft fairs. Audrey still has several quilts that are available and I always have books available.

Speaking of which, I have produced my first chapbook. It is 26 pages and includes some poetry and some essays. I like that the whole process is in house, which means I can keep the cost down. I anticipate doing more with that format.

I am continuing to work on AMON (ancient Egyptian historical fiction) and now a new non-fiction book intended for writers and would-be writers.

**T**he Greek calendar, any of a variety of dating systems used by the several city-states in the time of classical Greece and differing in the names of their months and in the times of beginning the year. Each of these calendars attempted to combine in a single system the lunar year of 12 cycles of phases of the moon, totaling about 354 days, and the solar year of about 365 days. Generally, three extra months were intercalated in every period of eight solar years. This practice, which was adequate to keep the calendar roughly in step with the seasons, seems to have been in force as early as the 8th century BC. Months, each of which contained either 30 or 29 days, began with the new moon. The Greek calendar that has been most studied, the Athenian, customarily began its year with the first new moon after the summer solstice.

(Written and fact-checked by Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica)

The Attic calendar or Athenian calendar is the lunisolar calendar beginning in midsummer with the lunar month of Hekatombaion, in use in ancient Attica, the ancestral territory of the Athenian polis. It is sometimes called the Greek calendar because of Athens's cultural importance, but it is only one of many ancient Greek calendars.

Although relatively abundant, the evidence for the Attic calendar is still patchy and often contested. As it was well known in Athens and of little use outside Attica, no contemporary source set out to describe the system as a whole. Further, even during the well-sourced 5th and 4th centuries BC, the calendar underwent changes, not all perfectly understood. As such, any account given of it must be a tentative reconstruction.

(encyclopedia)

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

So the bottom line is that there were many different calendars used in ancient Greece, but they seem to try to accommodate both the solar and lunar cycles. For most of them the focus was on the agrarian use of a calendar.

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**The Egyptian calendar** dating system established several thousand years before the common era, the first calendar known to use a year of 365 days, approximately equal to the solar year. In addition to this civil calendar, the ancient Egyptians simultaneously maintained a second calendar based upon the phases of the moon.

The Egyptian lunar calendar, the older of the two systems, consisted of twelve months whose duration differed according to the length of a full lunar cycle (normally 29 or 30 days). Each lunar month began with the new moon—reckoned from the first morning after the waning crescent had become invisible—and was named after the major festival celebrated within it. Since the lunar calendar was 10 or 11 days shorter than the solar year, a 13th month (called Thoth) was intercalated every several years to keep the lunar calendar in rough correspondence with the agricultural seasons and their feasts. New Year's Day was signaled by the annual heliacal rising of the star Sothis (Sirius), when it could be observed on the eastern horizon just before dawn in midsummer; the timing of this observation would determine whether or not the intercalary month would be employed.

The Egyptian civil calendar was introduced later, presumably for more-precise administrative and accounting purposes. It consisted of 365 days organized into 12 months of 30 days each, with an additional five days occurring outside the ordinary temporal construct grouped at the end of the year. There was apparently no attempt to introduce a leap-year day to compensate for the slippage of one day every four years; as a result, the civil calendar slowly rotated through the seasons, making a complete cycle through the solar calendar after 1,460 years. The months were named after those of the lunar calendar, and both systems of reckoning were maintained throughout the pharaonic period. In the 4th century BCE a schematized 25-year lunar calendar was apparently devised on the pattern of the civil calendar, in order to determine within accurate limits the beginning of lunar months without regard to actual observation of the moon's waning crescent.

(from Encyclopaedia Britannica website)

## Janus

In ancient Roman religion and myth, Janus is the god of beginnings, gates, transitions, time, duality, doorways, passages, frames, and endings. He is usually depicted as having two faces. The month of January is named for Janus. According to ancient Roman farmers' almanacs, Juno was mistaken as the tutelary deity of the month of January, but Juno is the tutelary deity of the month of June.

Janus presided over the beginning and ending of conflict, and hence war and peace. The gates of a building in Rome named after him (not a temple, as it is often called, but an open enclosure with gates at each end) were opened in time of war, and closed to mark the arrival of peace. As a god of transitions, he had functions pertaining to birth and to journeys and exchange, and in his association with Portunus, a similar harbor and gateway god, he was concerned with travelling, trading and shipping.

(from wikipedia)



Statue representing Janus Bifrons in the Vatican Museums

# Happy New Year!