

## ATHENIAN DATES BY MONTH AND PRYTANY

SEVERAL years ago I suggested that in Athenian decrees the date by month was so closely tied to the date by prytany that the designations coalesced and were thought of as a unit.<sup>1</sup> I went so far as to assert that there is no known example of an uninscribed space between the date by month and the date by prytany. Some years earlier I had been more conservative, saying only that I knew of no such vacant space coming between the date by month and the date by prytany.<sup>2</sup> It is always dangerous to assert that such and such a phenomenon does not exist. A wise teacher whose judgment I respect once warned his students against making any such negative dogmatic assertion. His observation was that one always ran the risk of having some investigator find an example, hitherto unnoticed, to prove the assertion wrong.

Within the year there has now been published a decree from the Athenian Agora in which Stephen Tracy claims an uninscribed space between the date by month and the date by prytany:<sup>3</sup> [----] τετράδι ἰσταμένου ὕ τετάρτη [τῆς πρυτανείας]. He illustrates the text with an excellent photograph (pl. 67) but offers no epigraphical commentary. The photograph repays careful study, for it is evident that there is in fact no uninscribed space between the two elements of the date. There is irregularity in the lettering of this text, but the distance, for example, from the final upsilon of ἰσταμένου to the initial tau of τετάρτη is the same, within a hair's breadth, as the distance from the first tau of Ἀττάλου of line 2 to the second tau immediately following in that same word. There is no room for an uninscribed space within the word Ἀττάλου, and by the same token there is no room for an uninscribed space between ἰσταμένου and τετάρτη in line 3. The top horizontal of initial tau has a very pronounced finial which, together with the last finial of the upsilon before it, occupies the space between the two letters. Geoffrey Woodhead writes to me under date of December 4: "There is *no vacat* in the middle of the date in that text of Tracy's. If one looks carefully at his photograph one can easily see that this is so. I think the issue is worth a small note, as the principle which you established is important."

The principle of "no uninscribed space within the dating formula" is indeed important, for it justifies the reading and restoration [Βοηδρομιῶνος] ὁ[γ]δοεῖ [ἐπ]ὶ δέκα τ[ετάρτε]ι καὶ δεκ[άτει τῆς πρυτανείας] instead of [Βοηδρομιῶνος] ὁ[γ]δοεῖ [ἐπ]ὶ δέκα [ὕ ἐβδόμ]ε]ι καὶ δεκ[άτει τῆς πρυτανείας] in a decree of the archonship of Peithidemos<sup>4</sup> where the reading of initial tau of τ[ετάρτε]ι is not so unquestionably clear as

<sup>1</sup> *AJP* 95, 1974, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> *Hesperia* 38, 1969, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Hesperia* 45, 1976, p. 287.

<sup>4</sup> *Hesperia* 5, 1936, pp. 418-419; 38, 1969, p. 111.

one might wish. The year of Peithidemos was thus an intercalary year<sup>5</sup> and the ninth Metonic cycle (280/79—262/1) had throughout a regular succession of ordinary and intercalary years.<sup>6</sup>

To state the principle of “no uninscribed space” conservatively I suggest that if such can be found it might be looked upon as the exception which proves the rule and that it should not be relied on as a guide in making restorations. It would be a very rare phenomenon indeed.

It has been argued recently that the archon Peithidemos belongs in 268/7 rather than in 265/4.<sup>7</sup> Heinz Heinen discounts the arguments advanced by Pritchett and Meritt that Peithidemos belongs at the beginning of a secretary cycle.<sup>8</sup> In neither of the two extant decrees of the year of Peithidemos are the name and demotic of the secretary preserved.<sup>9</sup> If Heinen is right, then his date for Peithidemos (268/7) conforms to the Metonic cycle, in which the 13th year (268/7) as well as the 16th (265/4) was intercalary, but the archon Diogeiton would be displaced and have to find a later berth. This is difficult. The question, now moot, could be settled if evidence should be discovered for the name and demotic of the secretary for the year of Peithidemos.

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<sup>5</sup> In my article of 1969 I offered an explanation of the calendar anomaly of *IG II<sup>2</sup>*, 687, where the year seemed to be ordinary. Two extra days had been added to the month Hekatombaion before the Panathenaia.

<sup>6</sup> *Hesperia* 38, 1969, pp. 109-112.

<sup>7</sup> Heinz Heinen, “Untersuchungen zur hellenistischen Geschichte des 3. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.,” *Historia*, Einzelheft 20, 1972, p. 213.

<sup>8</sup> W. K. Pritchett and B. D. Meritt, *The Chronology of Hellenistic Athens*, Cambridge, Mass., 1940, pp. 31-34.

<sup>9</sup> The two decrees known so far are *IG II<sup>2</sup>*, 687, and *Hesperia* 38, 1969, p. 111 (an improved text of *Hesperia* 5, 1936, p. 419). In both inscriptions space was left on the stone to receive the name of the secretary, but this name was never cut.