

# CHRONOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

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The establishment of the relative chronology of eponyms is rarely possible unless we have the ancient lists of them; otherwise the names float in time. The catalogue of Athenian archons from the Persian War to 302 BC has been preserved in the Books

XI-XX of Diodorus, who in his annalistic narrative mentions the Athenian archon of each year from 480 BC on. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Dinarc. 9) enumerates the archons until and including 293/2 (*cf.* Dinsmoor, 39). For the later period we have only fragmentary and disconnected lists on stone. From 356/5 on (with some interruptions such as under the oligarchic regime from 321/0 to 308/7) the annual secretaries (*grammateis*) followed each other in a regular sequence according to the tribes from which they came: the *grammateus* of the Erechtheis was followed by the *grammateus* from the Aeges, and so on. Thus, the tribe of the *grammateus* indicates the place of the corresponding archon in the tribal cycle (W. S. Ferguson, *Athenian Archons* (1899)). Yet, there were also disturbances within the cycle (*cf.* Pritchett, 385). Thus the number of Athenian archons before 480 and after 292 whose Julian year is certain remains very small, *e.g.* Phainippos in 490 (battle at Marathon). Only five archons of the third century (after 292) are dated with certainty by synchronisms (Dinsmoor, 45; Samuel, 210). On the date of the archon Arrheneides, *cf.* Pritchett, 288.

The case of the archon Polyeuctus, whose date is crucial for Delphic chronology, illustrates the difficulty of dating the Athenian archons of the Hellenistic Age. Two synchronisms show that he exercised his functions at the time of Antigonus Gonatas (263-240) and Seleucus II (246-225) (*cf.* L. Robert, *REA* 1936, 5). His year in office must thus be placed between 246 and 240. His probable date would be 246/5 (*cf.* G. Nachtergaeel, *Historia* 1976, 62). Yet the date 251/0 (E. Manni, *Fasti Ellenistici e Romani* (1961), 82) or the date 249/8 is still supported by competent scholars (*cf.* Meritt, 234; Samuel, 214; Meritt, *Historia* 1977, 168).

Thus all proposed lists of the Athenian archons of the Hellenistic Age differ and all are equally uncertain (*cf.* Manni, *op. cit.*; Samuel, 212; Meritt, *Historia* 1977, 168).<sup>52</sup> On the archons between AD 96 and 267 *cf.* S. Follet, *Athènes au II<sup>ème</sup> et III<sup>ème</sup> siècles* (1976).

Our reconstruction of a series of eponyms generally depends upon the existence (and availability) of corresponding ancient records. At some date a city decided to write down a list of its

past magistrates and to continue it each year. For instance, a list of priests at Cos which begins in 30 BC was published in 18 BC. The aforementioned list of the *stephanephoroi* of Miletus covers the period from 525/4 to 314/13 (ib. nos. 123-8 name eponyms from 313/12 to AD 2/3). The list was engraved in 334/3, and afterwards the name of the eponym was added every year. The question for the chronologist is how far back such a record is reliable. In the time of Plato (*Hipp. Maj.* 285 e), the Athenians believed that the list of archons, starting from Solon (594-3) was reliable. Yet, compilers could easily tamper with the list or simply invent the eponyms or kings of hoary antiquity. We reject as impossible the figures given in a cuneiform list for the twenty-three kings of the First Dynasty of Kish who allegedly reigned for 24,510 years. We disbelieve the list of archons for life and of decennialian archons of Athens for 1068-684 BC, but we may also question whether the first annual archon was Creon who exercised his office in 683 BC, as the *Marmor Parium* tells us.<sup>53</sup>