

ON THE DATING OF THE EXEDRA OF HERODES ATTICUS AT OLYMPIA

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Sometime in the middle of the second century of our era Regilla, the patrician wife of the rich Athenian sophist Herodes Atticus,¹ dedicated to Zeus the well-known exedra, a sumptuously appointed outlet of an aqueduct built to provide good drinking water for those attending the Olympic Games. It was first excavated in 1877–1878, during the German campaign at Olympia. The definitive results were published in 1892 (architecture), 1896 (inscriptions), and 1897 (statues).² More recent work on the exedra was published by H. Schleif and H. Weber.³ In addition to its primary function of storing and dispensing water the exedra was also a work of art. A semi-circular structure behind two storage basins, it displayed numerous statues of members of the imperial family and of the family of Herodes Atticus and his wife. The identity of many of those honoured is known from the inscribed statue bases found in the exedra and, re-used, in the adjoining Byzantine church. Many statues, too, have been found. Mostly headless and none any longer on its base, they present serious problems of identification.

In this paper I propose to discuss the date of completion of the exedra in the light of novel suggestions made in two recent articles. S. Settis has proposed one new argument in favour of the Olympic Games of A.D. 157 as the date of completion as well as one which would exclude the year 149,⁴ whereas an observation made by T. D. Barnes would restrict the completion to A.D. 153 or, less likely, to A.D. 157.⁵ My purpose will be to

¹PIR² C 802.

²a) F. Adler and others, "Die Baudenkmäler von Olympia," *Olympia*, ed. E. Curtius and F. Adler, 2 (Berlin 1892) 134–139; b) G. Treu, "Die Bildwerke von Olympia in Stein und Thon," *Olympia*, ed. E. Curtius and F. Adler, 3 (Berlin 1897) 260–279; c) W. Dittenberger and K. Purgold, "Die Inschriften von Olympia," *Olympia*, ed. E. Curtius and F. Adler, 5 (Berlin 1896) 615–640, Nos. 610–628.

³H. Schleif and H. Weber, "Das Nymphaeum des Herodes Atticus," *Olympische Forschungen*, ed. E. Kunze and H. Schleif, 1 (Berlin 1944) 53–82 and plates.

The semi-cupola over the exedra proposed by Adler but denied by Schleif and Weber has found a defender in C. Tiberi, "L'edra di Erode a Olympia e il Canopo della villa di Adriano presso Tivoli," in *Saggi di storia dell'architettura in onore del professor Vincenzo Fasolo* (Rome 1961) 35–48. Since, however, Tiberi agrees with the statue arrangement of Schleif and Weber (45), (except for the placement of the three imperial statues), his work has no direct bearing on this article.

⁴S. Settis, "Il ninfeo di Erode Attico a Olimpia e il problema della composizione della periegesi di Pausania," *AnnPisa Serie 2*, 37 (1968) 1–63.

⁵T. D. Barnes, "Philostratus and Gordian," *Latomus* 27 (1968) 583 and note 3.

show that no argument published so far, either past or recent, can conclusively establish or exclude any one of the Olympic years 149, 153, or 157.

In determining the date of the exedra it is certain that only the Olympic Games of 149, 153, and 157 can be considered. One of the inscriptions from the exedra states that statues of two children of Marcus Aurelius were present, those of Faustina and Ti. Aelius Antoninus.⁶ Faustina was born on November 30th, 147.⁷ Hence the Games of 145 are excluded. At the other end, the Games of 161 are too late because the exedra was in existence at least eight years before the self-immolation of Peregrinus Proteus at the Olympic Games of A.D. 165.⁸

The year 153, championed by Graindor, held the field for many years.⁹ His chief argument was based on the apparent age of Athenais, the daughter of Herodes Atticus. This argument is invalid for several reasons. Firstly, all the statues were found toppled from their inscribed bases.¹⁰ It cannot be clearly established which statue belongs to which base. Secondly, we know from the inscribed bases that at least six statues of children were displayed at the exedra.¹¹ Only two or three statues of children, all mutilated, have been found.¹² Consequently, it is not possible to show which child's statue belongs to which base. Worst of all for Graindor, the supposed body of Athenais, measured by him for his calculations, is now stated not to belong to the exedra at all.¹³ Thus nothing in Graindor and his followers establishes 153 as the necessary date.

The argument of Barnes in favour of 153 or 157 is based on evidence not considered by previous scholars. One of the statues at the exedra was that of the son of Herodes Atticus, Ti. Claudius Bradua Atticus.¹⁴ Since it has always been assumed that he is identical with the *consul ordinarius* of A.D. 185, Barnes, presumably because Bradua was made patrician by Antoninus Pius, thinks that he became consul at the age of 33. He would then have been born in 152. If firmly established, this date would obviously exclude the Games of 149 and decisively confirm either 153 or 157. However, it is not clear that it was the son of Herodes Atticus who held

⁶Above, note 2c, nos. 615-616.

⁷A. Degraasi, ed. *Fasti Ostienses XXVIII* in *Inscriptiones Italiae* 13.1 (Rome 1947) 206-207. The year 146 given in *PIR*³ A 714 has now been superseded.

⁸For the number of intervening Games see Lucian *De morte Peregrini* 19-21. The year of Peregrinus's death is reported by Eusebius, *Hieronymi Chronicon*³, ed. R. Helm (Berlin 1956) 204.

⁹P. Graindor, *Un Milliardaire antique; Hérode Atticus et sa famille* (Cairo 1930) 87-88.

¹⁰Above, note 2b, diagram on p. 261.

¹¹Above, note 2c, nos. 615, 616, 623, 624, 625, 626.

¹²Above, note 3, 58-59.

¹³Above, note 12.

¹⁴Above, note 2c, no. 623.

the consulship of A.D. 185. Pflaum prefers the other Bradua Atticus, the proconsul of Africa.¹⁵ In consequence, the possibility that Bradua could have been born in 149 or earlier cannot be excluded.

Although the year 153 has received most support, there have been scholars, both past and recent, who have favoured the year 157. This year was proposed by Adler,¹⁶ whose views were adopted by Münscher.¹⁷ Adler supposed that Regilla had held the priesthood of Demeter at the Olympic Games of 153. Out of gratitude for the honour shown his wife Herodes Atticus then supposedly promised to have the exedra ready for the Games of 157. This explanation rests on no evidence and appears to know too much. The dedicatory inscription of the exedra states that the exedra was dedicated by Regilla, the priestess of Demeter.¹⁸ There is no reason to assume that the inscription does not say what it appears to say, that Regilla was priestess at the Games marking the completion of the exedra. If so, the year 157 should not be considered, since we know from an inscription that during the 234th Olympiad (which includes the Games of 157) the priestess was not Regilla but rather Antonia Baebia.¹⁹

Settis, in his argument in favour of 157, makes use of two main arguments. One of them, drawn from Lucian (*De Morte Peregrini* 19–21), has been widely used. We read in Lucian that over a series of Olympic Games the Cynic Peregrinus first attacked the exedra for fostering effeminacy among the Greeks, then apologized, then promised to burn himself at the next Olympic Games, then did so. We know that his suicide occurred at the Games of A.D. 165.²⁰ Scholars have attempted, in working back from this date, to determine from these events the construction date of the exedra. Settis insists that the Greek of Lucian mentions only three Games.²¹ Consequently, Peregrinus must have attacked the exedra in 157. Harmon, to strengthen Graindor's argument, just as firmly maintained that Lucian's Greek specified four Games.²² A careful reader will have to agree with von Fritz that the Greek simply is not specific enough.²³ Furthermore, it should be noted that Lucian merely records an attack on the exedra; he does not say that its completion and the attack coincided. Consequently, the adventures of Peregrinus cannot provide an exact date for the completion of the exedra.

¹⁵H. G. Pflaum, "Inscriptions de la Tripolitaine romaine à propos d'un livre récent," *Syria* 30 (1953) 304–306. According to I. Avotins, "Bradua Atticus, the Consul of A.D. 185, and Bradua Atticus, the Proconsul of Africa," *Phoenix* 27 (1973) 68–76, two Braduas must be postulated, but there is not enough evidence to decide which Bradua Atticus was the consul of 185.

¹⁶Above, 2a, 139.

¹⁸Above, note 2c, no. 610.

²⁰Eusebius (above, note 8) 204.

²²*Lucian* 5 (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1936, Loeb ed.) 23 and 24, note 1.

²³*RE* 19.1 (1937) 657.

¹⁷*RE* 8 (1913) 935.

¹⁹Above, note 2c, no. 456.

²¹Above, note 4, 23–24.

The novel feature of Settis's article is his attempt to show that Regilla could have been the priestess of Demeter Chamyne in 157;²⁴ since she held this office when dedicating the exedra, the year of her incumbency would date its completion. To be successful, he would have to expel from 157 the previously mentioned Antonia Baebia. Inscription No. 456²⁵ reads: 'Αντωνίαν Βαιβίαν, . . . ἱέρειαν γενομένην τῆς Δήμητρος ἐπ[ι] τῆς σλδ' Ὀλυμπ[ι]άδος, . . . The 234th Olympiad included the Games of 157.²⁶ In his argument Settis attempts to demonstrate that the inscription of Baebia can be interpreted to show that she was appointed priestess in the period between the Games of 157 and 161 and officiated at the Games of 161 rather than at those of 157. If this were true, Regilla then could have been priestess at the Games of 157 and the completion of the exedra could be dated to that year.

Settis's demonstration is rather ingenious but rests on two hypotheses which cannot be proved. The first assumption requires that the Greek of the dating expression in Baebia's inscription ἐπὶ τῆς σλδ' Ὀλυμπιάδος refer not to the 234th Games in A.D. 157, but rather to the period from after these Games to the beginning of the 235th Olympiad (which includes the Games of 161). This usage of ἐπὶ with the genitive is indeed attested.²⁷ However, ἐπὶ plus the genitive can equally well mean "at the 234th Olympic Games."

Settis's second necessary assumption requires that the priestesses of Demeter be in office not, e.g., starting with the 234th Games in 157 and continuing up to the beginning of the 235th Games in 161 (their tenure during the inter-game period is attested),²⁸ but rather that they be appointed in the inter-game period preceding the Games at which they were to officiate. On this hypothesis Baebia would have been appointed in the 234th Olympiad, not at the 234th Games but rather after them, still, however, during the same Olympiad, in the well-attested wider sense of the term Olympiad (a 4-year period).

As far as I can see, Settis has offered no proof for his second assumption. He offers a number of inscriptions showing that various Olympic officials were in office during the inter-game periods. However, none of these inscriptions reveals anything about the manner of appointment of these officials. We can in no way establish the length of their tenure or whether it started with the Games proper or during an inter-game period.

It appears then that Settis's attempt to redate the priesthood of Baebia is not supported by cogent evidence. Furthermore, even if his interpreta-

²⁴Above, note 4, 15-17.

²⁵Above, note 2c.

²⁶It seems clear from Pausanias 6.20.9 that only one priestess at a time held the office.

²⁷Above, note 2c, nos. 473 and 474.

²⁸Above, note 27.

tion could have been proved he would merely have established the possibility rather than the fact of Regilla's priesthood at the Games of 157.

The proofs used by Settis to demolish an argument supporting a date of completion by the year 149 are not conclusive.²⁹ He starts from the fact that the statues of two children of Marcus Aurelius, Faustina and Ti. Aelius Antoninus, were displayed at the exedra.³⁰ He next observes that Faustina, the oldest child, was born on November 30th, 147 and Lucilla, her sister, on March 7th, 149. He then points out that it was physically impossible for a sibling to have been born between the births of Faustina and Lucilla. Consequently, Ti. Aelius Antoninus must have been born after Lucilla and, therefore, after the Olympic Games of 149. It is clear that this reasoning of Settis can have the force of proof only if, firstly, Lucilla was born in 149 and not later and, secondly, if it is impossible for her and Ti. Aelius Antoninus to have been twins. Settis is vulnerable on both counts. Numismatic evidence suggests that Lucilla either was born after 149 or, if born in 149, was a twin. There is no direct evidence that Lucilla was born in 149. Her age is calculated chiefly from the date of her marriage to Lucius Verus. We know merely that she was born on March 7th.³¹ Coins dated to 148–149 seem to record the birth of twins in the family of Marcus Aurelius. On some coins their sex cannot be determined, on others they appear to be boys.³²

If the twins were boys, Lucilla could have been born in 150. She married Lucius Verus around 164.³³ A Roman bride of fourteen need excite no suspicion. Agrippina, the mother of Nero, married when twelve or thirteen.³⁴ Brides of ten, or even younger, are attested.³⁵ It is obvious that if the twins were boys, the argument of Settis against 149 has no force. One of the boys may have died soon after birth, leaving only his brother to share the pedestal with Faustina.³⁶ Alternatively, and less likely, the other twin could have been on a base now lost.

²⁹Above, note 4, 13–14.

³⁰Above, note 2c, nos. 615–616.

³¹*PIR*² A 707.

³²In the three major collections available to me the apparent twins are always identified as boys: a) Harold Mattingly and Edward A. Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* 3 (London 1930) nos. 185, 857, 859 (Rule of Antoninus Pius). b) Harold Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* 4 (London 1968) lxvii and nos. 678, 679, 1827 (Rule of Antoninus Pius). c) Anne S. Robertson, *Roman Imperial Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet, University of Glasgow* 2 (Glasgow 1971) p. 195, no. 73, p. 228, no. 282.

³³Anthony Birley, *Marcus Aurelius* (London 1966) 174.

³⁴*PIR*² J 641.

³⁵M. K. Hopkins, "The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage," *Population Studies* 18 (1965) table on p. 321. A new example in *AEpigr* 1968 no. 139: girl married at the age of ten.

³⁶On the coins of 148–149 with two children of apparently different ages the sex of the

Even if we prudently refrain from trying to establish the twins' sex from their likenesses on the coins and assume that Lucilla was born in 149, it does not follow that the exedra could not have been completed by the Olympic Games of 149. If born in 149, Lucilla would have been one of the twins, with the other twin being the boy who shared a base with Faustina, Ti. Aelius Antoninus. The absence of a base with Lucilla's name on it need not mean that her statue could not have been present at the exedra in 149. Not all of the original statue bases or statues have survived.³⁷ Lucilla's may have been one of the victims of the Byzantine stone-cutters. The same explanation for her absence applies, *a fortiori*, if the exedra was completed in 157, the year advocated by Settis.

An argument in support of 149 can be adduced from general probabilities. It seems to me plausible that if children's bases were to be shared at the exedra, either by original design or because of last-minute births, those sharing one base would be the youngest, and presumably smallest, children. If the exedra had been completed by 153 or 157 one would expect Lucilla, certainly in existence by 153, rather than Faustina, the oldest child, to have shared a base with Ti. Aelius Antoninus. If the exedra was completed by 149, and before Lucilla's birth, Faustina would have been the only child available to share a base with one of the twins mentioned above.

To sum up, no combination of available evidence seems to exclude beyond any doubt any of the available Olympic Games. If degrees of probability are considered I feel that because of the attested priesthood of Antonia Baebia the year 157 is the least likely. The year 153 seems to me the most probable because the narrative of Peregrinus's involvement with the exedra strongly suggests that it was a novelty at the time of his attack on it. If it was a novelty at the time, then the Greek of Lucian can be interpreted to support either 153 or 157 as the date of completion; if, however, Peregrinus's attack did not coincide with the date of completion, then the year 149 is not excluded.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

smaller seems unidentifiable (always called a child by the editors): above, note 32a, nos. 449 and 1274 (Rule of Antoninus Pius); above, note 32b, nos. 705, 1843, 1854 (Rule of Antoninus Pius); above, note 32c, p. 285, no. 56.

³⁷Above, note 3, 53–61. On the problem of identification see also H. Weber, 5. *Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Olympia*, ed. E. Kunze (Berlin 1956) 142, note 60.2 and T. D. Barnes (above, note 5) 584–585.

³⁸I wish to correct a mistake which I noticed when it was too late to integrate its correction into the article. I wrongly assumed that Barnes (see footnote 5) was the first to have observed that Bradua Atticus, as a patrician *consul ordinarius* in A.D. 185, was likely to have been born in A.D. 153. In this Barnes had been anticipated by A. R. Birley, "The Origins of Gordian I," *Britain and Rome: Essays Presented to Eric Birley on his 60th Birthday*, ed. M. G. Jarrett and B. Dobson (Kendal 1966), 58.