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*IRT 794B* AND THE BUILDING HISTORY OF THE HADRIANIC BATHS AT LEPICIS  
MAGNA

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***IRT 794b***  
**and the Building History of the Hadrianic Baths at Lepcis Magna**

J.M. Reynolds and J.B. Ward Perkins published as no. 794b in their admirable repertoire *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (Rome 1952) this text and preceding description:

On the rough edge of a block (edge: .95m x .08), from which veneer panels have been sawn both horizontally and vertically, at rt. angles to the inscribed face. Hadrianic Baths, in the W. Gymnasium:

[Imp(eratore) Ca]e[re] III et Balbino co(n)s(ulibus) ratione [

The date, as supplemented, is the fourth consulship of Caracalla in A.D. 213. Ward Perkins elsewhere registered caution about the restoration (*JRS* 41 (1951) 89 and n. 4). The photograph published here on Plate IX (b) is from the archives of the British School at Rome and was not included in the original publication.<sup>1</sup>

The Imperial titulature is worrisome. Although Caracalla was generally called Imp. Caesar M. Aurelius Antoninus, this title was not shortened to Imp. Caesar, *tout court*. The shorter form Imp. Antoninus was also in general use and is paralleled at the Docimium quarries in Asia Minor, the source of this block of Phrygian marble (*marmor Phrygium* or *syn-nadicum*; *pavonazetto* in the Italian vernacular).<sup>2</sup> Another difficulty is that the Balbibus who shared the *fasti* with Caracalla was holding his second consulship and so should have been labelled *cos. II*.<sup>3</sup> The text given by the editors of *IRT* is a great improvement over that

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Amanda Claridge, Assistant Director of the British School at Rome, for locating the photograph in the archives and making a copy of it for me.

<sup>2</sup> The parallel is No. 83-45 in the reference following. On the quarries at Docimium and their marbles, see J.C. Fant, *Cavum Antrum Phrygiae: The Organization and Operations of the Roman Imperial Quarries in Phrygia* (British Archaeological Reports International Series, in press), and "Four Unfinished Sarcophagus Lids in the Quarries at Docimium and the Imperial Quarry System in Phrygia," *AJA* 89 (1985) 665-672; and the work of the foremost student of the area, M. Waelkens, "From a Phrygian Quarry: The Provenance of the Statues of the Dacian Prisoners in Trajan's Forum at Rome," *AJA* 89 (1985) 641-653; *Dokimeion. Die Werkstatt der repräsentativen kleinasiatischen Sarkophage* (Archäologische Forschungen 11, Berlin 1982), with abundant bibliography.

<sup>3</sup> A. Degrassi, *I fasti consolari dell' impero Romano dal 30 av. Cristo al 613 d. Cristo* (Rome 1952), 59.

provided by Bartocchini.<sup>4</sup> I will propose a small correction that will remove the remaining difficulty and restore the correct date.

The block has been sawed to a thin wafer-like shape; it may in fact have been abandoned simply because it had become too narrow to saw. The resulting front surface tapers so that only the extreme top of the letters are preserved at the left, the upper half to two thirds at the right. Thus reading the large, informal but clear letters is difficult.

My attention was drawn to this inscription while editing a large number of quarry inscriptions recorded at Docimium.<sup>5</sup> At a certain point I realized that I had been confusing the vertical strokes numbering iterated consulships and those of the N for *n(ostro)*, both of which regularly follow Imperial names. Since supralineate bars are customary over both, they are no help in distinguishing one from the other. The letter cutter of the fragment at Lepcis oddly eschews these bars entirely (which is equally unhelpful), and he uses either no diagonals in his Ns or ones so faint as not to appear in the photograph (note these letters in *Balbino* and *ratione*). Thus we should see the first two bars of the iteration as actually forming an N; hence the same surviving letters may be read (and supplemented) differently so as to remove the unparalleled titulature for Caracalla:

[L. Aelio Ca]e[s]a[re] n(ostro) II et Balbino co(n)s(ulibus) ...

The offending *Imp. Caesare IIII* thus disappears in favor of the commonplace *L. Aelio Caesare n(ostro) ii*. The consuls are Hadrian's ill-fated heir Aelius Caesar and P. Coelius Balbinus Vibullius Pius, the *ordinarii* of the year 137.<sup>6</sup> One of the new inscriptions from Docimium provides a verbatim parallel to this titulature and appears to have been cut by the same hand.<sup>7</sup>

The result of this revision is to remove evidence for Severan repairs or renovations to the Hadrianic Baths<sup>8</sup> and instead to suggest a protracted period for the original construction and decoration (often seen as two distinct operations),<sup>9</sup> stretching well beyond the probable dedication date of 127 (*IRT* 601).

<sup>4</sup> *Le Terme di Leptis* (Bergamo 1929) 95; [*Aproniano*] et *Pae[t]jino co(n)s(ulibus) ratione*, dated to A.D. 123 and so associated by Bartocchini with the original construction of the Baths.

<sup>5</sup> See above, note 2, the first citation; 240 new quarry inscriptions are edited and discussed.

<sup>6</sup> *Organization and Operations* (above, note 2) ch. 4; H. Bloch, *CP* 39 (1944) 254f.

<sup>7</sup> No. 84-58 in *Organization and Operations* (above, note 2). The block was seen within the quarry of Bacakale during recent clearing operations in 1984 and could not be photographed. My conjecture about the hand is based on a sketch of the letter forms made at the time and the fact that supralineate bars are also absent here. The block subsequently disappeared, probably into one of the huge dumps near the ancient quarry.

<sup>8</sup> So P. Pensabene, *Marmi dell' Asia minore* (Rome 1977) 53 n. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. esp. *ILS* 334 = *CIL* XIV 98 = R. Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire. Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge<sup>2</sup> 1982) no. 439, recording the emperor Antoninus' completion of construction begun by Hadrian: *thermas in quarum exstructionem divos pater suus HS (vicies) polli[citus erat], adiecta pecunia, quanta amplius desiderabatur, item marmoribus ad omnem ornatum perfecit*. Cf. also Pliny's gift of a bath at Tifernum Tiberinum, *CIL* V 5262 = *ILS*

Two more items are worth noting. From the photograph it seems as if the carver extended the upper bar of the *E* of *ET* to form the habitual ligature but then in a fit of forgetfulness cut a superfluous *T* after it. The hand that cut No. 84-58 at Docimium wrote, at the same juncture, a plain *E* but then forgot the *T*.

There remains the difficult word at the end of the extant portion of the inscription: *ratione*. The word in the Ablative appears in quarry inscriptions in the set phrase *ex rat(ione)* naming the contractor who is consigning the block of marble. Outside this one context the only other occurrence of the word is on a pair of columns published by Henzen in 1843. It may not be coincidental that the columns, now in the Vatican Museums epigraphical collection, are also dated to the year 137. The relevant phrase in these two texts is *rationi urbicae* (not *rationis urbicae*, as Henzen read it and successors have repeated).<sup>10</sup> In the present inscription from Lepcis I cannot see a middle bar in the last letter. The photograph there shows a bright line; strokes, however, cast dark shadows whereas bright spots are caused by surface abrasions which reflect light into the camera lens. Moreover, what could be seen as part of the upper curve is not in the right position and, therefore, must be discounted as well. Hence in the Lepcis inscription I would suggest *rationi* in place of *ratione*, yielding a Dative to match that of the Vatican columns:

[L. Aelio Ca]e[s]a[re] n(ostro) II et Balbino co(n)s(ulibus) rationi [

2927 = Duncan-Jones no. 469a, *adiectis in ornatum*; *CIL* V 1895 = Duncan-Jones no. 469, Concordia; *CIL* XIV 6191 = Duncan-Jones no. 483, the decoration of a *schola* at Ostia.

<sup>10</sup> G. Henzen, *AnnInst* 15 (1843) 333-46 (the heading of the article gives the date of Henzen's address as *al natale di Rome, li 21 Aprile 1844*). The texts have been reproduced without change by L. Bruzza, "Iscrizioni dei marmi grezzi," *AnnInst* 42 (1870) 190f. nos. 258 and 259, and Ch. Dubois, *Étude sur l'administration et exploitation des carrières de marbre, porphyre, granit etc. dans le monde romaine* (Paris 1908) 90 nos. 199 and 200.

I have been able to reexamine these inscriptions through the courtesy of Dott. Carlo Pietrangeli, Director of the Vatican Museums, and Dott. Ivan di Stefano, who kindly gave me access to the epigraphical magazines and helped me locate the quarry texts. The two columns, each inscribed on both ends, had been put to use in the Lateran Palace, but the inscriptions were saved as sawn plaques (one, a secondary text on the upper end of Bruzza no. 258 could not be located, however; another text cut along the shaft of the same column was presumably lost when the column was reused).

The inscriptions will be republished in my study of the new Docimium inscriptions (above, note 2). The only substantial change to the texts is, in fact, to the phrase in question. Neither inscription has any trace of an *S* at the end of the word *rationi*, which comes in both cases at the end of a line. The space is cramped in Bruzza no. 259, but no. 258 (pl. IX c) is conclusive since there is room for at least one letter, perhaps two.

O. Hirschfeld had noticed and called attention to the inaccurate reading current then (and now), but his footnote in the chapter "Bergwerke" of *Die kaiserlichen Verwaltungsbeamten* (Berlin 1905) 177 note 2, has been overlooked by one and all.

The change in the meaning is small but not trivial, as Hirschfeld pointed out. The dative marks the columns as destined for the *ratio urbana* (possibly the accounting arm of the *cura operum publicorum*), rather than as belonging to it as property (genitive). The columns were the property, of course, of the *ratio marmorum*. Both were Imperial entities, but that is not important when precise accounts had to be kept for separate organizations.

The Lepcis columns may well also have read *rationi urticae*, meaning that they had been diverted from stocks for Imperial construction in Rome to another Imperial project abroad. But we cannot know whether this was the case or whether some other *ratio* yet unattested was named. Only a rough parallel is provided by the well known blocks of black marble at Lepcis (*IRT* 530a & b), labelled *dimittendus i[n sp]lendidissimam coloniam Leptim Magnam iussu Fulvi Plautiani* etc.<sup>11</sup> Since *IRT* 794b was probably a destination label, it is more the pity that it breaks off where it does since it would have added to our very small list of destination labels on marble blocks.<sup>12</sup>

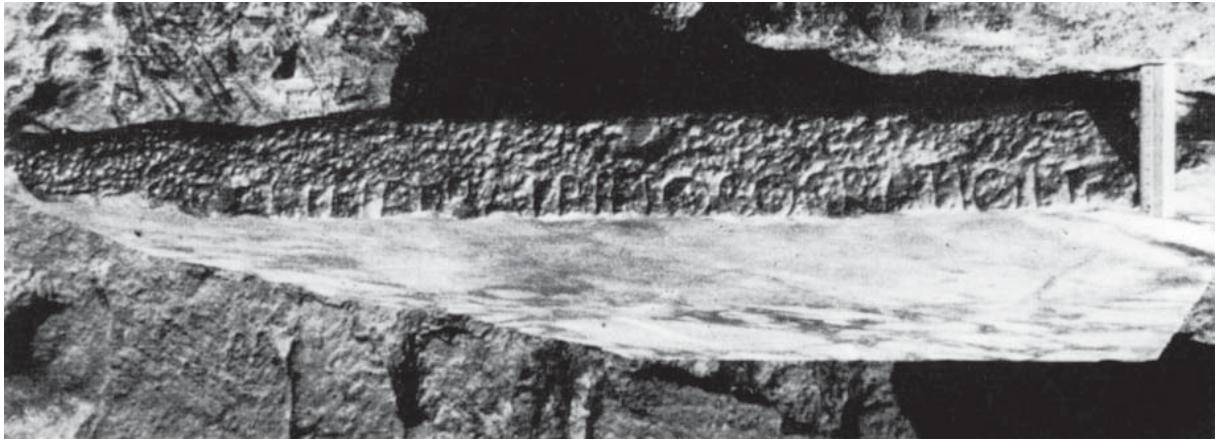
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<sup>11</sup> See the discussion by Ward Perkins (above, note 1), 90-92f.; he argued that it was at least a possibility that Plautianus owned the quarries of black marble, location still unknown.

Two new inscriptions at Docimium may include destination labels. One (No. 86-41 in the work cited above, note 4) reads *iussu Aur(elii) [ ]r[ ]n / FRANS*, in which the procurator Aurelius Marcio may be named and the garbled *FRANS* may be a destination label. The other is a normal second-century quarry text (No. 83-46) which ends with the word *Romae*, unconnected to anything preceding and evidently a destination although puzzling since it would seem too obvious to need saying.



b)



c)

b) Inschrift aus Lepcis Magna (IRT 794b); c) Inschrift in Rom, Vatikan Museum