

PETER BRENNAN

DIOCLETIAN AND ELEPHANTINE: A CLOSER LOOK AT POCOCCO'S PUZZLE  
(IGRR 1.1291 = SB 5.8393)

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Two European travellers passed each other on the upper Nile in the busy winter of 1737/1738. Richard Pococke saw and copied a Greek inscription on a wall built round part of a temple on the southern end of the island of Elephantine. For that he deserves gratitude. His published transcription includes many errors and one intriguing riddle, only partly justified by his disclaimer that the inscription was in several parts defaced and that he copied it in a hurry, but there appears to be no other record of it.<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Norden seems to have seen the inscription a month earlier, but did not bother to copy it.<sup>2</sup> E.Jomard, with the French army expedition at the start of the nineteenth century could already find no trace of it, and it is unlikely to turn up. Unless and until it does, we are left with only Pococke's puzzling copy.

J.Franz reproduced Pococke's transcription in CIG 3.4892, substituting some of the ten variant readings which Pococke had noted at the foot of his published copy (clearly as later reflections on his notes, not on site doubts) and a few gratuitous variants of his own. Franz also produced an edited text, but his low regard for Pococke's copy led him to several restorations which ignored, at times needlessly, both his actual letters and his generally meticulous indication of the number of unread letters. The despairing tone of his few comments may be largely responsible for the subsequent general neglect and the occasional abuse of this inscription. His text was followed in IGRR 1.1291 (reproduced as SB 5.8393) with a few minor editorial changes, some reflecting Pococke's copy more accurately, others not. A perceptive note pointed out the reversal of lines 21 and 22, but the significance and implications of this have never been pursued.

A re-edition of the text and some brief comments have value, both positive and negative. A proper text may rescue from unmerited oblivion a document which sketches a useful, though cryptic, cameo of imperial actions, civilian-military relations and administrative arrangements in Egypt in the time of Diocletian. The inscription seems to have been noted in only two contexts. The unorthodox and exotic imperial titulature in the received text has

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<sup>1</sup> R.Pococke, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries* (London, 1743), 1.278 (text), 117f. (description).

<sup>2</sup> F.Norden, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia* (tr. P.Templeton, London, 1757), 100ff. with plate V. In the collaborative work *Description d'Égypte* (2nd ed. Paris, 1821), 1.182, E.Jomard says that he looked for it in vain. Nor is there any sign of it in D.V.Denon, *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte pendant les campagnes du Général Bonaparte* (London, 1802), 1.206f. who turned over and questioned every rock on the island.

found an uneasy place, or been ignored, in discussions of tetrarchic titulature.<sup>3</sup> A closer look, however, at the peculiarities of Pococke's letter readings and line order shows that there is no warrant for anything other than an orthodox titulature, both in the titles recorded and in their order. The titles Hibericus and Parthicus can again be discarded from tetrarchic titulature. Secondly, ever since Pococke took ὄρουσ (line 17) to mean "bounds", the text has been taken to mention directly either local municipal boundaries or the imperial boundaries set at the first cataract by Diocletian ((Proc., Bella 1.19.27ff.).<sup>4</sup> The actual text does not, however, readily fit such a meaning, but it does fit the meaning "decisions", a meaning commonly attested in contemporary papyri (see my comments on line 18, but the unsatisfactory state of the text at this point allows some uncertainty).<sup>5</sup> The local reorganisation resulting from the new frontier is surely part of the background of the events noted, but there is probably no specific allusion to territorial boundaries.

Pococke's copy must be the basis of any text, but many of his peculiar readings here (as in other inscriptions copied by him) are most unlikely to represent the letters actually inscribed. There seems little point in preserving them in a reedited text. Thus, while retaining those letters of Pococke which are possible, though odd, variants, I have replaced Pococke's improbable letters with those expected. Letters which would be expected and which approximate closely in shape those read by Pococke have been indicated by a dot subscript (being treated as doubtfully read letters); expected letters which are far different in shape have been indicated by half square brackets (being treated as editorial corrections of scribal errors). It is obvious that, granted the defective nature of Pococke's copy, no credence can be given to a particular orthography, be it Pococke's or any other, and no linguistic argument should be based on it. Another departure from Pococke's copy which seemed necessary was to renumber lines 21ff in the order of my reconstruction of the original text, with Pococke's line numbers (which cannot reflect the original) given in brackets. To allow access to Pococke's actual order of lines and his readings in all cases, a facsimile of his published copy is appended.

- 1 ἰώ]ς δὲ ἰπρ]οσιήκόν ἐσιτιν] ἰπ]ερὶ ἰτιῶν π]ιρ]οσιν]οιμῶ]ν καὶ τῶν  
ἀπηγ]λορευμέν]ων μ]ινήμην]ν π[οιή]καθ]αλι]ι
- 2 ἐν τῇ ὑμετέρ]α δεή]σι τῶ διασημοτ]άτω {ατω} καθολ]ικ]ῶ ἰπ]ρὸς ἰχ]ίαριν  
φ[ρ]οντί]αται ἰώ]ς οὐκ ἔ]δει ὑ]μι]ᾶς
- 3 <κ>]ια]ὶ ἰπ]ερὶ τούτων ἔ]νοχ]λί]θαι· περὶ δὲ τῶν γηδίων ἄ]περ ἔ]ν τῇ νή]σῳ  
εἶ]ναι ἐμνημονε]ύ]αται

<sup>3</sup> P.Kneissl, *Die Siegestitulatur der römischen Kaiser* (Göttingen, 1969), 38ff.; A.Arnaldi, *RIL* 106 (1972), 37f. nn.36, 38; E.Volterra, *Mélanges d'histoire ancienne offerts à W.Seston* (Paris, 1974), 499; A.K.Bowman, *BASP* 15 (1978), 29; T.D.Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Ma., 1982), 59 n.58, but see 17ff. for the standard titulature; more often the text is simply ignored.

<sup>4</sup> Pococke (n.1), 278; CIG 3.4892; J.D.Thomas, *ZPE* 22 (1976), 276 n.106; Bowman (n.3), 29f.

<sup>5</sup> P.Beatty Panop. 2.96,99; restored at 93,298; SB 5.7696,15; 12.11219,11223; earlier P.Thead. 15.20.

- 4 ἄπερ διὰ τοῦ πραιποσίτου τοῦ ἐν Κοήνῃ διατρίβοντιος ἡμιετέρας  
 ἐργασείας βίη κατέ-
- 5 χεσθαι ἐδήλωσεν, γράμματα πρὸς τὸν τῆς ἐπαρχίας ἡγούμενον, δοθῆ[να]ι  
 [ἐκελεύσαμεν]
- 6 ἵνα τὴν ἀδικίαν ταύτην παρὰ τὸ ἔθουσι συνηθείας ἀποστρέψῃ καὶ  
 κωλύσῃ, ἵνα ὑμεῖς
- 7 τὴν ἐργασίαν τῶν αὐτῶν γηδίων, ὡς περ ἠξιώσεται ἔχειν α.ης.[...18...]  
 8 [...19...] οπ.σεπειδωρηιουνω εὐθέως ἐνομίσαμεν, ινεσοσεαεινεροσυι  
 9 ἰ δέ τις ἐπιμύνη(ι) οὐ διτάομεν· εἰ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τῶν ἐκ τῆς  
 ὑμετέρας ἀξιώσεως ἢ παρὰλο[γο]
- 10 κατάστασις ἦναντιώθη τῇ τοῦ καθολικοῦ κελεύει ὑπεναντίον τηλικαύτης  
 ἐνοχλήσεως
- 11 προειρησάμεθα ὑμῶν· καὶ ὅμως ἐπιδὴ ἐδηλώσατε τοὺς ἡμετέρους πολήτας  
 [...7...]
- 12 ἐκ τῆς προειρημένης ἐτίας μέχρι νῦν ἐν τῇ τάξει τῶν καθολικῶν τουτέστιν  
 εἰς τὴν [...]
- 13 μηλιτιῇ ἐν διατέματι κατέχεσθε καὶ σφόδρα ἠξιώσατε ἵνα τὴν διωρεὰν ἡμῶν,  
 εἰς τὴν
- 14 μνήμην ἐποιήσασθαι ἰσχυρὰ(ν) ὑμῆν καὶ ἀκερέαν διαφυλαχθῆναι  
 κελεύομεν, γράμματα
- 15 πρὸς τὸν ἡμέτερον (καθολικὸν) δοῦναι ἐκελεύσαμεν (ἵνα τὴν ἡμετέραν  
 δωρεὰν
- 16 ἦν δὴ πάλιν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῆ[ν] ἐποι(η)σάμεθα, ἰσχυρὰν διαμένειν  
 ἀνέχεται
- 17 πλὴν ὅμως εἴ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ τοὺς ὅρους τοὺς {ο} ὑπὸ ἐμοῦ τοῦ  
 Διοκλητιανοῦ Σεβαστοῦ
- 18 ὑμῆν [π]αραδοθέντας χωρίσαι εὐ[ε]ργῶν ἰαίρεθίεν τά{ι}ς ἐξ ἔθους  
 συντελεία{ι}ς ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν
- 19 αὐτοὺς τὸ ἰκανὸν ποιεῖν πάσης [...9...] πσυποπαμααφρς...οις.....χ  
 20 τῶν γραμμάτων vacat ἐρμηνεία
- 21 (22) Αὐτοκράτωρ Καίσαρ Γάιος Αὐρήλιος Οὐαλέρι-
- 22 (21) ἰοις Διοκλητιανὸς Εὐσηβῆς Εὐτυχῆς Σεβαστοῦ ἀρχιερεῖς  
 μέγιστος
- 23 (24) Γερμανικὸς μέγιστος. Καρματικὸς(ς) μέγιστος {τος}
- 24 (23) .τι ἰΠιε(ς)ικὸς μέγιστος ἰτιδὸ [β] Βριττανικὸς ἰΚαρπικὸς
- 25 (26) Ἀρμενικὸς Μηδικὸς Ἀδιαβανικὸς δημαρχικῆς ἐξουσίας
- 26 (25) [Αὐτοκράτωρ ὑπατ]οις πατήρ πατρίδος (ἀν)θύπατος
- 27 ( ) [Αὐτοκράτωρ Καίσαρ Μάρκος Αὐρήλιος Οὐαλέριος Μαξιμιανὸς]
- 28 (27) Εὐσειβῆς Εὐτυχῆς Σεβαστοῦ ἀρχιερεῖς μέγιστος Γερμανικὸς

- 29 ( ) [μέγιστος Καρματικὸς μέγιστος Περσικὸς μέγιστος Βριτανικὸς Κ-]  
 30 (28) αρπικ[ὸς Ἀρμενικὸς Μηδικὸς Ἀδιαβενικὸς δημαρχικῆς]  
 31 ( ) [ἐξουείας αὐτοκράτωρ ὑπάτος πατήρ πατρίδος ἀνθ-]  
 32 (29) ὑπάτος vacat <Φ>λαύιοις Οὐάλεριος Κωνσταντιοῖς  
 33 (31) ἸΓαλιέρηιοῖς [Οὐλέριος] ἸΜαξιμιαν[ὸς Γερμανικὸς Σαρματ-]  
 34 (30) ἰκοὶ Περσικοῖς Βριταννικοῖς ἰΚαριπτικοῖς Ἀρμενικοῖς Ἀδιαβενικοῖς  
 35 (33) [μέγιστο]ι οἱ ἐπιφανέτατοι [Καίσαρες]  
 36 (32) λέγουσιν Ἐλεφαντινίταις καὶ Κοηνίταις τοῖς ἐν Θηβαίδι  
 37 (35) ἰχαιίρεϊν ὑπὸ τοῦ πρωτοστίατου ὑμεῖς συμημοματου [...13...]  
 38 (34) ἡμεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐξ ἔθ[ν]ους <ς>υντελειῶν

2. 1. δεῖξει 1. φροντίσατε 1. ἡμᾶς 3. 1. ἐνοχλεῖσθαι 1. ἐμνημονεύσατε 4.  
 1. ὑμετέρας 6. 1. ἔθος 7. 1. ἀξιώσατε 9. 1. εἰ δέ 11. 1. ἐπειδή 1. ὑμετέρους  
 πολίτας 12. 1. αἰτίας 13. 1. κατέχεσθαι 14. 1. ὑμῖν 1. ἀκεραίαν 1.  
 κελεύωμεν 16. 1. ὑμῖν 18. 1. ὑμῖν 38. 1. ὑμῖν

1. CIG καθὰ προσηκόν CIG μ[ν]εῖαν ἐποιή]σασθαι, but see line 14. 2. CIG  
 [ἐ]φ[ρ]οντίσασθαι 3. IGRR [γερ]δίον 4. CIG [ἐφ' ὑ]μετέρα [βλ]α[φ]ημία  
 [κ]ατέχεσθαι 5. CIG δο[θέντα, ἐν οἷς προστάξαμεν 6. CIG παρὰ τὸ ἐ[ξ]ὸν  
 συνηθείας ἀποστρέψι[ε] καὶ κωλύσι[ε]. 7. CIG τὴν εὐ[π]ά[θ]ειαν 8 CIG [ἐν τῷ]  
 ἐπι[λοί]π[ω], [χρ]όν[ω], εὐθέως ἐνόμι[α] δεῖν 9. CIG μάλιτα τ[ὸ] νῦν τῆ[ς]  
 ὑμετέρας ἀ[ξ]ιώσεως [συμ]πα[θ]ί[ς]αντες, ἐν ᾧ ἦ] 12-13. perhaps ἐνόχλησιν or  
 διάκρισιν 13 CIG [ἦν] εἰς τὴν 15. CIG ἡμέτερον [ἐπίτροπον]; possibly ἡμέτερον  
 δουκ[ι]ὰ δοῦν[αι] or δουκ[ι]ὰ δοθῆν[αι] 16 CIG ἡμε[ί]ς 18. CIG χωρ[ί]αι ἔργω  
 [π]ειρ[α]θίεν τὰ[ς] ἐ[ξ] ἔθους συντελείας 19. CIG πάσης [ἀδικίας] 20. CIG [τῶν  
 γραμμάτων [τῶν Καισάρων] 24. CIG Ἰβ[η]ρικὸς μέ[γιστο]ς, Βριτανν[ικὸ]ς  
 [μέγιστο]ς 26. CIG [καὶ Αὐτ]ο[κρ]άτ[ωρ] Καί[σαρ] Οὐ[αλέριος] Μαξιμιανὸς] 31.  
 CIG ἔ[ξ]ο[υ]εί[α]ς, [ὑπάτος] 32. CIG Κωνσταντ[ίος] Γερμαν[ο]ς] 34. CIG ἰκο[ί],  
 Περσικὸ[ς], Βριταννικὸ[ς], Παρθικὸ[ς] 38-37 (37-38). CIG [τὴν] μὲν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐξ  
 ἔθους συντελειῶν γενομένην πραγ[μα]τ[ε]ία[ν] ὑπὸ τοῦ [ἐ]π[ι]τ[ρα]τή[γ]ου ὑμεῖς

(Whereas) it is fitting to have drawn attention to the foraging parties (? privileges) and the  
 illegalities in your petition to the Most Perfect Rationalis, please note that there was no need  
 for us, too, to be bothered on these matters. But, in the matter of the land plots which you  
 said are on the island and which your petition made clear are being kept by force from your  
 working by the praepositus residing at Syene, we have ordered a letter to go to the governor  
 of the province, that he might remove and prevent this injustice contrary to the practice of  
 custom, so that you (may have) the usage of these land plots, just as you asked to have....

we have immediately considered.... if anyone stays, we shall not hesitate. And if, to take the chief of the matters in your claim, the irregular situation was contrary to the command of the *rationalis* opposing such disturbance (?requisition), we have provided for you. Nevertheless, since you made it clear that your fellow citizens... have been held in suspense until now in the officium of the *rationalis* for the aforesaid reason, that is to say in the matter of the disturbance (?requisition/decision), and since you asked especially that we order our *benefice*, to which you drew attention, be given full and inviolate protection on your behalf, we have ordered a letter to go to our *rationalis* (? *dux*) that he might ensure that our *benefice*, which indeed we have made to you again in your presence, remain in full force, notwithstanding that, if any of you, in violation of the decisions which have been given to you by me, Diocletian Augustus, should be caught having dissociated from cultivated lands the customary taxpayments attaching to them, (know that) they are to make satisfaction for every.....

Translation of the letter. Emperor Caesar Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus Pius Felix Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, Germanicus Maximus., Sarmaticus Maximus., Persicus Maximus twice, Brittanicus, Carpicus, Armenicus, Medicus, Adiabenicus, with tribunician power, emperor, consul, father of the fatherland, proconsul, Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus Pius Felix Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, Germanicus Maximus, Sarmaticus Maximus, Persicus Maximus, Brittanicus, Carpicus, Armenicus, Medicus, Adiabenicus, with tribunician power, emperor, consul, father of the fatherland, proconsul, Flavius Valerius Constantius and Galerius Valerius Maximianus, Germanici, Sarmatici, Persici, Brittanici, Carpici, Armenici, Adiabenici, most noble Caesars send greetings to the people of Elephantine and Syene in the Thebaid. By the protostates you... to us in respect of the customary taxpayments....

The inscription comprises two documents written in Greek. Neither is complete. Lines 1-19 form the latter part of a communication of Diocletian, probably a rescript in its technical form, though its heading is missing and its end is only a jumble of letters. It is addressed to the people of Elephantine and/or Syene, to judge from the findspot and incidental references. In it, among other actions, Diocletian, who is present, reaffirms an earlier *benefice*, while noting a proviso which relates to customary taxpayments. Lines 21ff give the heading and the fragmentary introduction of a tetrarchic document (line 20 "translation of the letter" seems to refer to this document, but some constructions in the first document appear to reflect a latin original and suggest that, it, too, is a translation); its formulaic greeting, though unusual (perhaps an unidiomatic translation) suggests that it is a rescript. It is addressed to (or, at the very least, concerns) the people of Elephantine and Syene, and it also notes customary taxpayments before breaking off. It is dated after the assumption of the titles associated with the Persian wars, titles taken no earlier than mid 297 and probably not later than 298.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For 297, Thomas (n.4), 275; for 298, Barnes (n.3), 63 and Phoenix 30 (1976), 182ff.

The two documents are clearly related by their common elements (origin at the tetrarchic court, addressee and subject matter), but their precise relationship is not entirely clear. There seem three possibilities. The first (and most likely, assumed in my interpretative comments) is that the second document is the one referred to in the last lines of the first document, that is, it is the original letter conveying both the benefice and the associated provision about taxpayments; its appendage here is necessary to clarify (and memorialise) the nature of the benefice, which is alluded to, but never specified, in the first document. The second possibility is that these two documents were part of a larger, continuing dossier on the whole subject, the second representing a further (i.e. third) stage in the petition and response process after the receipt of the first. Against this, it is not easy to accept that Diocletian, who showed some impatience at being bothered a second time on these matters and who had twice insisted on taxpayments, should respond yet again (and grant tax concessions, for that alone would have provided a suitable stimulus for inscribing this particular document). A third possibility should also be noted - that the two documents are actually part of the same document, with their correct order reversed by Pococke (who has certainly incorporated line reversals in his copy) and with a linking section missing. Nothing in the actual text precludes this, but the specification of the people of Elephantine and Syene as "in the Thebaid" suits better a letter originating away from the area than one written while the emperor was present; as well, from what is extant of the first document, the petition to which it was a response does not seem to have been primarily about taxpayments (with which the second document begins), but about certain abuses.

The inscription alludes to a series of events culminating in Diocletian's presence at Syene. He had sometime earlier granted the inhabitants of Elephantine and Syene a benefice; its nature is not specified, but it related to lands, though it was not to be at the expense of customary taxpayments attaching to them. The circumstances underlying the original grant may be hinted at in the subsequent military infringement of longstanding local rights of land ownership; this led the locals to petition the *rationalis*, presumably because it affected their ability to meet their taxes on these lands. One might surmise that the whole chain of events at Elephantine began with the disruption provided to the local status quo by new military dispositions linked to the redefining of the imperial frontier at the first cataract around this time. The exact date of this reorganisation is not clear, but it may have begun with the Theban campaign of Galerius in 293/5 and spread over several years.<sup>7</sup> Its first sign may be the imperial camels who stayed behind at Elephantine in early 295, perhaps a unit in the series of *alae dromedariorum* with tetrarchic names; although there is no such unit listed in the *Notitia* at Elephantine or nearby, it may have been transferred elsewhere or lost before the *Notitia* compilation.<sup>8</sup> None of the certain units in the new border disposition is attested

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<sup>7</sup> Proc. Bella 1.192.7ff.; the reorganisation is usually dated to 298, see Bowman (n.3), 28-30; Barnes (n.3), 55 but Thomas (n.4), 276f. is right not to reject an earlier date.

<sup>8</sup> P.Oxy. 43 recto col. II.1ff; for *alae*, ND or 31.48,54,57.



before 300, when a detachment of Legio III Diocletiana was at Syene (P.Beatty Panop. 2.245), but some or all may have arrived several years earlier. New units brought dislocation over rights (including territorial rights) and particularly supplies. The imperial camels were partly being provisioned from far off Oxyrhynchus in 295 and units in the Syene region were often supplied from elsewhere in the fourth century.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps that is why the camels were on the very fertile island, for it was hardly an appropriate site for camels other than for ease of provisioning; it may even have been their supplementary foraging activities on the island (or those of a comparable unit) which initiated the dispute, and brought about Diocletian's "benefice", perhaps making a demarcation between lands belonging to the locals and lands incorporated in the military territorium. Neither the imperial benefice, nor, according to the petitioners, a specific order from the rationalis, safeguarded their rights. Diocletian was probably absent from Egypt at this time, for the locals took a petition on the general matter to the office of the rationalis at Alexandria. No action had been taken when Diocletian arrived at Syene and was made aware of the petition to the rationalis and some more specific abuses. He took some no longer clear immediate action on behalf of the landholders and he cranked up the gears of the administration for their longer term support, shooting off one letter to the governor to correct the specific abuses and another to a second official (probably the rationalis) to reaffirm his benefice. Success is not to be assumed. Although local civilians did not give in without a struggle, the future in the garrison towns of the later Roman empire lay with the military and in accommodation with it.<sup>10</sup> The emperor had twice arbitrated the dispute in a way which showed he was neither a pawn of the military nor unaware of the tax dodges of landowners, but the rationalis had not been able (or even perhaps willing) to protect the right of local landholders, and without the rare and accidental presence of the emperor his support was hardly worth the stone on which it was so ostentatiously written. It is little wonder that the most conscientious of emperors, bombarded by petitions on the same matter and unable to be everywhere or to depend on his officials, chose to abdicate.

The specific dates framing these events are tantalisingly close, yet in the end elusive. Two different chronologies seem possible. Diocletian was certainly in Egypt during the revolt of Domitianus in 297/298, though not necessarily the whole time; he was expected at Panopolis in September 298, probably on his way to or from Syene.<sup>11</sup> Assuming the reaffirmation of the benefice occurred in later 298, the original grant would date to late 297/early 298 (its titulature does not allow any earlier date), followed by the infringements and petition to the rationalis while Diocletian was out of Egypt (presumably meeting Galerius at Nisibis). Particularly, but not only, for those who cannot accept such a relatively early date for the

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<sup>9</sup> Bowman (n.3), 37.

<sup>10</sup> See H.I.Bell et al., *The Abinnaeus Archive* (Oxford, 1962).

<sup>11</sup> Barnes (n.3), 54-55 for the gap in Diocletian's known movements and the evidence for Egypt; Thomas (n.4), 273ff. for the dating of the revolt of Domitianus.

Persian war, a different chronology is worth considering. Diocletian seems to have been in Egypt again in 301/302, when, to judge from a motley array of items, individually suspect, but of cumulative weight, he was in Alexandria and perhaps further upstream.<sup>12</sup> Assuming the reaffirmation of the benefice occurred on a visit to Syene in 301/302, the original grant would date to his stay in Egypt in 297/298 (perhaps even to a previous visit to Syene, if *πάλι* in line 16 refers to his presence, not to the grant), followed by the infringements over a longer time and the petition to the *rationalis* while Diocletian was certainly out of Egypt. In the current problematical state of our evidence on the date of the end of the Persian wars and on when and how often Diocletian visited Syene, it would seem more than a little arbitrary to select one dating framework over the other.

1. Either *προνομῶν* ("foraging for provisions", cf. P.Flor. 288.81) or *προνομιῶν* ("privileges", cf. P.Flor. 382.14) fits letters, spaces and context; if *ἐνόχλησις* or its verb means requisition in any of its occurrences in the text, that would favour the former.

2/3. Reading *ἡμῶς* fits the apparent distinction between matters in the petition to the *rationalis* (which should be left to him) and new matters in the petition to Diocletian (which he is to decide himself). Yet the text as it stands may be correct, especially if *ἐνοχλεῖσθαι* has the technical sense "subject to requisition" noted for its related noun (see line 10). The island is presumably Elephantine, the only local one cultivable.

4. *Praepositus* by itself is the most common contemporary title for a military commander (P.Oxy. 43 recto, *passim*; P.Beatty Panop., *passim*). The failure to distinguish his unit by name implies that Syene had only one unit, presumably the unit of Legio III Diocletiana there in 300 (P.Beatty Panop. 2.245). That may resolve a longstanding crux in the text of the *Notitia Dignitatum* (or. 31.35 and 65). Otto Seeck's edition has two units at Syene. One, listed among legions and surely a legion in origin despite its current name, *militēs miliarenses*, has long been identified with the detachment of III Diocletiana.<sup>13</sup> It is, however, surprising that this detachment alone among detachments of this legion in the *Notitia* has lost its distinctive name, and it would seem better to identify the *miliarenses* with a detachment of two Phoenician legions possibly at Syene by 323.<sup>14</sup> *Miliarenses* is an apt name for a combined detachment notionally of *miliary*, or two cohort, strength. The second unit, given in manuscripts as *cohors quinta Suentium quinta Syene*, was emended by Eduard Böcking to *Suenensium Contra Syene*, by Seeck to *Suentium (quinta) Syene*. Seeck's view on the site has prevailed, but this inscription suggests that the cohort was not at Syene around 298, by

<sup>12</sup> For the evidence, A.K.Bowman, *JRS* 66 (1976), 160 with nn.70-75; for a visit to Memphis, Barnes (n.3), 41f.; dedications to each tetrarch at Thebes by the *praeses* in December 301 (see Barnes 147) and a possibly contemporary dedication to Galerius there by the *rationalis* (AE 1934,10) may just commemorate an imperial visit.

<sup>13</sup> D. van Berchem, VII Congress of Roman Frontier Studies (Tel Aviv, 1971), 126.

<sup>14</sup> Two inscriptions note a detachment of legions I *Illyricorum* and III *Gallica* under a *praepositus* named Victorinus, one (ILS 8882) dated 316 on a bowl found at Coptos, the second (SB 1.4223) dated 323 on a stone said variously to have come from Luxor (Thebes) or Assuan (Syene).

which date it almost certainly existed. It is connected by its serial numbering and its probably barbarian name (omitted or concealed by the form *Suentium*) to other cohorts listed in the Thebaid in the *Notitia*.<sup>15</sup> The highest numbered unit in the series (XI *Chamavorum*) was at its *Notitia* site by 300 (P.Beatty *Panop.* 2.291). Since none of the auxiliary units named in the Beatty papyrus had changed its site by the time of the *Notitia*,<sup>16</sup> it is unlikely that the *cohors quinta* had either, so that site was not Syene. It may well have been *Contra Syene*, and thus vindicate Böcking.<sup>17</sup> The new disposition of military forces at the first cataract about 300 A.D. would seem to be as follows: at Philae the new *legio I Maximiana* of unknown size (ND or. 41.37); at Syene a detachment of *legio III Diocletiana*, probably military;<sup>18</sup> opposite Syene a cohort, presumably quingenary; at *Castra Lapidaria*, also in this region, to judge from its place in the *Notitia* listing (or. 31.66), another cohort. Elephantine may also have had a unit (note the imperial camels there in early 295, see above, note 8), but its *Notitia* cohort was a Theodosian creation (or. 31.64). The presence of such a large military force in the region, larger than had ever before been stationed there in Roman times,<sup>19</sup> may have given rise to the local manoeuvring and problems of readjustment that form the background of the inscription.

5. The praeses Thebaidos was probably Julius Athenodorus, attested in September 298 and in early 300.<sup>20</sup> The end of the line has been restored with a similar formula to that of line 15, which fits the space, rather than with Franz' alternative, which ignores it; it is possible that the same word (whether *δοθῆναι* or *δοῦναι*) was used in both places.

7/8. Any restoration is mere speculation, but the apparent first person of the verbs suggest further provisions of Diocletian rather than part of his letter to the praeses.

9/10. Franz' restoration of the end of line 9 ignores spacing indications. For *ἐνόχλησις* "requisition", cf. P.Panop. Beatty 2.190, where it is also qualified as *παράλογος*. Diocletian's reform of the tax and requisition system had to contend with the baggage of much past practice.

12/13. The crucial word is fragmentary, with no obvious word fitting Pococke's letters; either *ἐνόχλησις* or *διακρίσις* fits the space, possible meaning and some letters.

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<sup>15</sup> ND or. 31. 61-63, 66-67: VI *Saginarum* (unintelligible, perhaps *Sarmatarum*), VII *Francorum*, IX *Tzannorum*, IX *Alamannorum* (the number of one of these units, listed successively, a dittographical error for the missing VIII or X in the series), XI *Chamavorum*. IV *Iuthungorum* in Egypt (ND or. 27.43) may also belong to the series.

<sup>16</sup> Compare P.Beatty *Panop.* 2.37, 169,291 with ND or. 31.46, 54, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Diocletianic activity opposite Syene is represented by an inscription naming Diocletian seen in the ruins of a Coptic monastery there, but not copied, by W.Hamilton, *Remarks on Several Parts of Turkey Part I Aegyptiaca* (London, 1809), 34.

<sup>18</sup> A.H.M.Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1964), 3.187ff. estimated this unit at 1035 men; R.Duncan Jones, *Chiron* 8 (1978), 540ff. at 506 men; its possible replacement by a military unit may be an argument for the former.

<sup>19</sup> M.P.Speidel, ANRW II.10.1. (forthcoming).

<sup>20</sup> P.Beatty *Panop.* 1.78; 2.58 for this range of dates.

15. In this shorter than usual line a textual lacuna and/or error obscures the identity of the recipient of the letter. There seems no warrant, either palaeographical or contextual, for ἐπίτροπον (procurator), as in CIG and subsequent texts. The context of the present dispute favours the rationalis, since the letter is specifically related to matters under consideration at his officium. If, however, the text is merely corrupt, either ἡγούμενον or δουκά could be read, the latter an easy haplography. There is little to be said for the former; a second letter to the governor would seem otiose. As for the dux, whether such an official existed at this time is uncertain. In the first and second centuries A.D., there was an overall commander of the units based on the first cataract; a localised sector commander is later attested in the Upper Thebaid, under the title dux in 253 and under the title comes in 338.<sup>21</sup> A dux of this type may have existed in the intervening period (including 298/302, when the new frontier dispositions called for strong local overall command); or there may already have been a dux of the new regional type (dux Egypti Thebaidos utrarumque Libyarum), first attested on 2 July 309, but first created at an unknown date.<sup>22</sup> Although the fact that a praefectus Egypti in 299 and a praeses Thebaidos, both in 300 and in this inscription, were administering military-related functions may seem to suggest that there was no dux around this time, it should be noted that the governor retained some jurisdiction over soldiers when the dux did exist.<sup>23</sup> Ambiguity of jurisdiction may have required letters to both governor and dux. Ultimately, argument for the dux requires too much special pleading; the recipient is probably the rationalis.

18. In this line Diocletian is clearly safeguarding taxpayments against attempts to evade such liabilities. If ὅροι means "decisions", the context is easily envisaged. Diocletian is reaffirming both parts of an earlier decision which not only granted a benefice (presumably the possession of lands), but also prohibited the evasion of associated taxes. Just such an attempt at evasion (in unclear circumstances) may be one facet of the dispute currently under investigation by the rationalis; Diocletian's letter serves both as advice to him in the present case and as reiteration of his earlier warning to the landowners. The text here printed, which is relatively close to Pococke's copy, gives such a sense. Franz' text also assumes this sense, but it is a little further from Pococke's letters, and it would seem better to give ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν a referent in εὐεργῶν than to understand it as ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῶν. If ὅροι means "bounds", as later commentators seem to assume, though a suitable Greek text close to Pococke's letters is hard to find, then the primary illegality would be the violation of boundaries, not the evasion of taxes; it would surely be surprising that Diocletian passes over such a violation in silence while insisting on taxpayments on such illegally held lands.

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<sup>21</sup> Speidel (n.19).

<sup>22</sup> AE 1934.7-8; M.Chr. 196, dated correctly by J.Lallemand, *L'administration civile de l'Egypte de l'avènement de Dioclétien à la création du diocèse* (Brussels, 1964), 261 no.5; R.Remondon CE 40 (1965), 186; D.van Berchem, *L'armée de Dioclétien et la réforme constantiniennne* (Paris, 1952), 8ff.

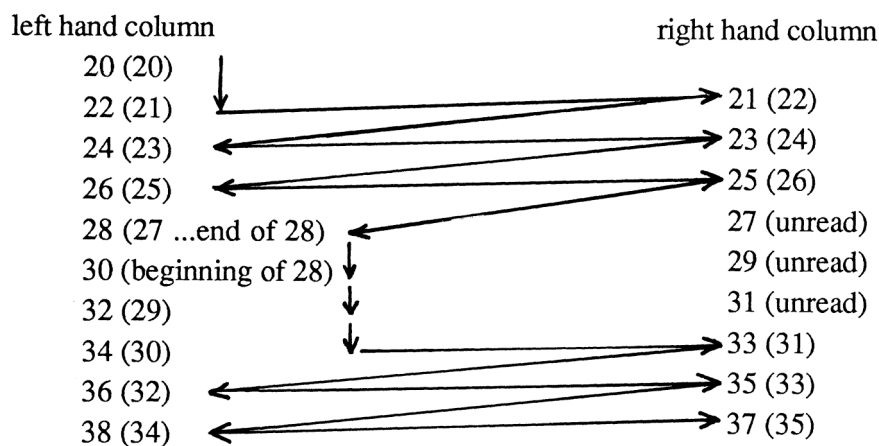
<sup>23</sup> P.Oxy. 1204; P.Beatty Panop. 1.385; 2.230; Bowman (n.3) 33.

21ff. Pococke's lines 21 and 22, when read in the reverse order, begin the orthodox titulature of Diocletian, as IGRR 1.1291 recognised. The pattern continues, for the next lines, when read in the same reverse order (i.e. in Pococke's numbering, 24, 23, 26, 25) and slightly emended, complete his titulature. A similar pattern recurs with Pococke's lines 30-33, which, when read in the order 31, 30, 33, 32, reveal the name of Galerius, the titles of the Caesars and the addressee of the letter, i.e. the expected conclusion of the heading of a tetrarchic letter. The final two lines, despite uncertainties in reading, seem to continue the reversal pattern. Pococke's intermediary lines 27-29 do not, as they stand, fall into the same reversal pattern, though they contain elements of the tetrarchic titulature expected at this point - titles in the singular, which can only belong to Maximian, and the name of Constantius. If, however, one posits three extra lines of the original inscription not copied by Pococke, (and one further error, detailed below) it is possible to complete an orthodox tetrarchic titulature and to reconstruct an intelligible format for the original inscription. It would thus seem reasonable to accept an original complete titulature set out in such a way, either as inscribed or in Pococke's notes, that his published copy could both persistently reverse lines in a common pattern and omit three lines.

The obvious (and, as far as I can see, only) explanation of such orderly reversal is that at some stage in its history the text was set out in two columns, which fell out of alignment. Pococke gives no useful details of the stone or of his note-taking methods, but a clue may lie in Norden's description of "a kind of pedestal, made of great blocks of a white stone, loaded with Greek inscriptions".<sup>24</sup> If the text was inscribed across two such blocks, each line may have fallen out of alignment at the point where it passed from one block to the next, perhaps due to uneven subsidence. Alternatively, the stone may have split vertically, with much the same effect. In either case, Pococke, whose notes show that he recognised the name of Diocletian, but whose transcription reveals that he understood little of the details, may have decided that the letter should begin with Diocletian's name, on the left hand block, whereas it really began with the titles following the heading "translation of the letter" on the right hand block; the latter had now slipped so that Pococke could think it was on the next line. With such an initial error, the continuing reversal pattern falls into place. A diagram may clarify this. The inscription is set out in its original state, before misalignment, with original line numbering (Pococke's in brackets); the arrows show the direction in which Pococke read the lines.

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<sup>24</sup> Norden (n.2), 102.



This hypothesis of separate blocks seems also to explain the three missing lines. These lines, together with the very poorly copied, and presumably badly defaced, lines 33 and 35, will all have been on the same block, each under the other; this section of the inscription must have been so poorly preserved that Pococke could read little of 33 and 35 and nothing of 27, 29 and 31. In the absence of lines on the right hand block to confuse him, Pococke read only the lines on the left hand block and did so successively, except for one final oddity in his copy. The text of his line 28 cannot be right as it stands, for the titles are in the wrong order. Ἀρχιερεὺς μέγιστος Γερμανικὸς should precede not follow Καρπικὸς. If, however, these words are moved to the end of the preceding line, they would rightly follow Εὐσεβής, which is the probable reading of the first word of this line; a line including these two elements is the one expected at this point in his reversal pattern. It seems that Pococke, who could only read five letters at the beginning of line 30 and thus had a large gap in his transcription of the rest of this line, displaced the end of line 28 (the preceding line in his copy) onto his gap in line 30. Whatever the solution to this intriguing puzzle, and the major merit of mine is to trace a range of oddities to a relatively simple pattern of error, the original inscription probably had in essence a standard titulature. The exact form of the restored sections cannot be guaranteed, and it may have included errors and omitted some titles (as apparently Medici in line 33), but there is no warrant for peculiar titles.

36/37. This seems to combine the formulaic introductions of an edict ("the emperors say") and of a rescript ("the emperors to the Syenites, greetings"). But λέγουσι ... χαίρειν may have been meant to translate literally the normal formulaic introduction of a Latin rescript, dicunt salutem.

36. Both the letter traces and the tax function suit the reading protostates. If correct, this would add a sixth mention of this briefly existing official, the first attested in the Thebaid,

but it adds nothing on the dating termini of the post or its duties.<sup>25</sup> However, the abrupt beginning to the letter and the addition of yet another character to the *dramatis personae* cast some doubt on the reading.

University of Sydney

Peter Brennan

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<sup>25</sup> Most recently on protostates, J.E.G.Whitehorne, ZPE 62 (1986), 159ff. Lallemand (n.24), 44 n.4 rightly rejects Franz' ἐπιτροπήγου. I wish to acknowledge with thanks advice offered, and perhaps not often enough accepted, over much time by Meg Miller, Alan Bowman, John Lee and John Whitehorne.