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ONE THYSDRUS OR TWO?

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The status of Thysdrus, the modern El Jem (formerly El Djem) in Tunisia, has been the subject of a great deal of discussion during the past hundred years. The place's enrolment in *Galeria* was registered by W.Kubitschek, *Imperium Romanum tributim discriptum* (1889); only Lugdunum shared that tribe outside the Iberian peninsula, where more than fifty places were assigned to it; and that has led many scholars to suppose that Thysdrus had been chartered as a *colonia* by the time of Augustus. The Elder Pliny (H.N. 5,30) styles it an *oppidum liberum*, going back presumably to the Caesarian age, when as a minor *civitas* it sided with the Pompeian cause, and was fined by Caesar (bell. Afr. 97). But since the discovery of an inscription from Arles (XII 686 = ILS 2911), of the time of Philip, A.D. 244-249, naming a man [*na*]tione *Afer Bizacinus, o[riundus m]unicipio Septimia libe[ra T]hysdritanus*, it has become the rule to assume that it was only from Septimius Severus that the place received a charter for the first time, and that as a *municipium*. There is a clear summary of the evidence, which comes to that conclusion, in C.Lepelley, *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine II*, 1981, 318-322. But, for reasons which will become apparent presently, I have found the current assumption of a Severan charter difficult to accept, in the case of such a flourishing city as its extant monuments show Thysdrus to have been: witness the enormous amphitheatre, perhaps by far the most impressive of all the visible Roman structures of Tunisia, itself preceded by a smaller amphitheatre, first (it seems) formed before the end of the first century, and reconstructed perhaps in the time of Hadrian (cf. the splendid recent book by J.-C.Golvin, *L'amphithéâtre romain*, Paris 1988, 84, no.25 and 131, no.112). And there is direct evidence that Thysdrus was supplying recruits for the legions throughout the second century, as I came to appreciate after the publication of the famous inscription from Nicopolis near Alexandria, commemorating the discharge of men from *legio II Traiana* in A.D. 157, five of the men giving Thysdrus as their *origo* (for the best text of it cf. Forni and Manini, *La base eretto a Nicopoli in onore di Antonino Pio dai veterani della legione II Traiana*, Genova 1969).

It has been the publication of a magnificent monography by Yann Le Bohec, *La troisième légion Auguste* (Paris, 1989) which has led me to review the evidence, and to come to a very different conclusion. Le Bohec has taken a particular interest in the other ranks of *legio III Augusta* (after a less detailed, but still useful, study of its officers, pp.149-184). He divides his attention to them into the four categories: non-commissioned officers, private soldiers, veterans, and men whose status is not discoverable (in several cases, not necessarily legionaries). In each category he lists the men in alphabetical order, first of nomen or, lacking that, of cognomen, within the periods to which he believes the relevant inscriptions

may be assigned; in the great majority of cases he gives his reasons for the dating in his main text, while the texts of the inscriptions are printed in full in footnotes.

After a general introduction, pp.185-195, he takes "Le personnel de la légion: soldats titulaires d'un grade ou d'une fonction", i.e. to an English reader N.C.Os.: first century Augustus to the beginning of the reign of Vespasian, from Vespasian to Trajan, second or third century (not precisely assignable to one or the other), from Trajan and Hadrian to Commodus, third century (in general), the Severans to Maximinus Thrax, and Valerian to Carinus and Numerianus, with a brief note on slaves and freedmen; this has occupied pp.196-258, followed by an appendix, pp.259-265, listing the men in alphabetical order under their specific posts, again in alphabetical order, from *Actuarius* to *Vexillarii*. It should be noted that the long list of N.C.Os. includes as many as 95 veterans, whose names are not repeated in the category of veterans, pp.284-310: these have been included in the book for their value in the study of the legion's recruitment and of the men's nomenclature, but not in their own right, as that topic is to be the subject of a forthcoming thesis by P.Corbier. The other categories are arranged in the same chronological groups, with the author's reasons for the dating duly given. Finally, if we turn to pp.489-530 we come to discussion of the recruitment of the legion, by periods and by places of origin (and of social status), much of the evidence being set forth conveniently in tabular form. It was in a section on the juridical status of men's places of origin that I came upon what has led me to raising the question to which the title of the present paper refers, for on p.526 Thysdrus is termed a *municipium* under Septimius Severus, a *colonia* at some time in the third century: Lepelley is cited as the most recent convenient justification for that interpretation, based specifically on the epitaph from Arles; and he gives the total of second century Thysdrans in *leg. III Augusta* as "4 (+1)"; if we refer back to his table on p.498, for men recruited under Hadrian or Antoninus Pius, we find references to four texts: VIII 18067, 10 and 23 (p.290, M.Antonius Saturninus and p.292, T.Flavius Rusticus, both of them enlisted in 140 or 141 and discharged in 166), 18085, 18 (p.211, M.Antonius Donatus, "late Hadrian/Antoninus Pius") and 18087, 30 (p.311, C.Vibius Saturninus, "Trajan/Hadrian to Commodus"). His table for the period from Marcus Aurelius to Commodus shows nothing from Thysdrus, p.499; but we find two men demonstrably enlisted in the 170s: VIII 18068 b 45 (p.299, P.Magnius Gemellus, veteran c.197, recruited in 173), and 2618 = 18096 b 19/20 (p.237, L.Ianuar(ius) Rogatianus, discharged in 200 and so enlisted in c. 175). And there is one other legionary, assigned by Le Bohec to the time of Severus, who ought surely to belong rather to the first half of the second century: VIII 3177 (p.283, T.Licinius T.f. Gal. Secundus, Thyz(dro) - for filiation, tribe and origo are not to be expected on an inscription much if at all later than the middle of the second century).

Thus far, therefore, we have seven men from Thysdrus serving in *leg. III Augusta* before the time of Severus. To them we may add the five men who were discharged from *leg. II Traiana* in 157, enlisted therefore presumably in 131 or 132: C.Crepereius Pudens in coh. I,

C.Herennius Piso in coh. IIII, M.Pomponius Silvan(us) in coh. VI, L.Magnius Adiutor in coh. VIII, and C.Marius Donatus in coh. X (Forni and Manini give the details). That is to say that, already in Hadrian's day, Thysdrus was sending men into the legions. For an earlier period we have no evidence, as far as I can see; at least, Le Bohec has been able to cite none, and his scholarship is of so high a standard of thoroughness that we may be confident that no evidence exists. But there is an inscription from Thysdrus itself which goes to show that the city was already a fully operational chartered town in the time of Hadrian, even if we had no evidence for its sending those recruits to *leg. II Traiana*: ILAfr. 43 is a fragmentary dedication in honour of L.Catilius Severus cet., proconsul of Africa in 124/125 (cf. R.Syme, *Roman Papers III*, 1984, 1305), set up *d. d. [p. p.]*: that is a characteristic phenomenon, a corporate dedication by the council of a chartered city in honour of a current proconsul.

Finally, there is the equestrian administrator, L.Egnatuleius P.f. Gal.Sabinus, honoured at Thysdrus by an inscription which sets forth his career up to the procuratorship of the XXXX Galliarum (VIII 10500 = ILS 1409, cf. PIR², E 44): at Thysdrus he was *flam. Aug. c[oloniae]* (other Egnatuleii occur on the same text). His final post may have been as late as the time of Commodus (so, H.-G.Pflaum, *Carrières* no.217), though an earlier date has been suggested by M.G.Jarrett in *Epigraphische Studien* 9,1972,177: the restoration *c[oloniae]* cannot well be questioned. The nomen is a very rare Italian one, cf. W.Schulze, *Lateinische Eigennamen* p.459. Another rare Italian nomen, not registered by Schulze, is Crepereius, cf. the man of *leg. II Traiana*, C.Crepereius Pudens above; another member of that gens from Thysdrus was among the men discharged from *coh. XIV urbana* in 218, who had been enlisted in 197 and 198 (VI 32526), namely A.Crespereius A.f. Iul.Felix, Tusdr.; there are a good many Crepereii in Roman Africa, including five in *leg. III Augusta* listed by Le Bohec. It may seem likely that Egnatuleius and Crepereius both stem from early Italian settlers, perhaps in late Republican times, if not among the Campanian followers of Sittius. (It must be observed that B.Levick and S.Jameson, in their paper on "C.Crepereius Gallus and his gens" (*JRS* 54,1964,98-106), suggested that the African Crepereii came via the Roman army from the East under Hadrian, but I see no justification for that assumption.)

So far, all the evidence that has been cited, apart from that Arles text, has pointed towards the old belief that Thysdrus was an early *colonia*, enrolled in *Galeria* in the closing years of the Republic, and constituting a significant source of citizen recruits for the Roman army, from the time of Hadrian to that of Marcus Aurelius (for the third century, Le Bohec lists seven on p.501, though three of them have been transferred by me to the second century list, above). The place was to earn undying fame from the rising of its *iuvenes* against Maximinus Thrax in 238, though the *Historia Augusta* merely describes it as *oppidum Tusdrum* (v. Maxim. 14,3). It was no doubt because of its key part in the fall of that tyrant that the *praefectus equitum* of the *ala Augusta ob virtutem appellata* at Old Carlisle in Cumbria (VII 344 = RIB 897 = ILS 502), Aemilius Crispinus, proclaimed himself *natus in*

pro(vincia) Africa de Tusdro. Nobody could doubt where he came from, the city which was the source of the Gordianic regime, for whose health the altar was dedicated, under the governor Nonius Philippus, in 242.

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What, then, of the epitaph from Arles, as it is reproduced in ILS 2911, reading as follows: --]ntius Saturninus ex [trierarcho] classis Britannicae Phi[lippiana]e, na]tione Afer Bizacenus, o[riundus m]unicipio Septimia Libe[ra T]hysdritanus, te[stamento] ---. If, like the officer at Old Carlisle, the dead man who drafted his obituary, had come from the famous city of Thysdrus, why should his place of origin be specified so fully? Surely the answer ought to be, that there was a second place of that name, less famous and only chartered more recently, and it was thought necessary to make sure that nobody might be misled by the place-name. We may compare, for example, the famous Thugga, the modern Dougga, and the far more obscure Thugga Terebinthina (cf. Lepelley, II 218).

When I began to consider such a possibility, I noted under VIII 25934 (Hr. ben Ergusia) a reference to a *saltus Tuzritanus* or *Thusdritanus*, and I wondered if that had been upgraded as a *municipium*; but my son Anthony Birley has drawn my attention to a paper by J.Carcopino, "L'inscription d'Ain-el-Djemala" (MEFLA 26,1906,365-481), in which that *saltus Tuzritanus* was discussed, and portrayed in a figure on p.427 as situated north of Thubursicum Bure/Teboursouk, far from Byzacena. But there is a place in Byzacena to which my son has referred me: a paper by R.Cagnat discussed the geographical boundary between the two provinces into which, in the fourth century, the proconsular province had been divided, Zeugitana remaining under a proconsul, while a praeses was entrusted with Byzacena, to the south and south-west (Klio 2,1902,73-79). At p.75 he noted that of the bishops attending the synod of 482, those from Byzacena included one from Thusurus/Tozeur, registered as *Tuziritanus*. That seems to me to be a prime candidate for the *municipium* from which the man buried at Arles had originated; he was perhaps proud of being the first citizen of a recently chartered, and little known, town to rise into the imperial service.

It may be noted that a revised reading of the Arles inscription was propounded by A.Beschaouch in *Latomus* 26,1967,405ff., on the basis of a careful drawing of the stone. Allowing for a praenomen, he concluded that the man's nomen could not have required more than one letter for its completion, hence the following reading: -. A[ntius Saturninus ex [trierarcho] / classis Britannicae Phi[lippiana]e / na]tione Afer Bizacenus o[riundus ex / m]unicipio Septimia Libe[ra Thysdra / T]hysdritanus te[stamento] ---. (He pointed out that the form Thysdra is to be found in the *bellum Africum*, as against the epigraphically attested form Thysdrus.)

For the post which Antius Saturninus (if that was his full name) had held, it seems to me difficult to accept that he had been a trierarch in the *classis Britannica*: a man from an inland town in the province of Africa could hardly qualify for service as a ship's captain, let alone

in the Channel fleet. But it would not be unusual for an equestrian officer to become prefect of the British fleet: cf. A.R.Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1981) 305ff., citing four or five such prefects. We may therefore restore *ex [praefecto]* on that Arles text, thus being in a position to claim the latest yet attested prefect of the *classis Britannica*.

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I ought not to terminate this paper without expressing my gratitude to Professor Le Bohec for providing such a stimulating opportunity for me to examine the contribution of Thysdrus/El Jem to the Roman army. That is only a small part that many scholars will have to thank him for, in producing such a memorable book, documented by so many thousand texts, some of them still unpublished, which he has laid under contribution in a book which is a worthy successor to René Cagnat's monograph, published almost a century ago.

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Carvoran

Eric Birley