

K. A. Worp

OBSERVATIONS ON SOME MILITARY CAMPS AND PLACE NAMES IN
LOWER EGYPT

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Observations on Some Military Camps and Place Names in Lower Egypt

The *Notitia Dignitatum* (hereafter: *Not.Dig.*), Or. § 28, dating from the end of the 4th century A.D., contains a listing of the military camps in Lower Egypt under the command of the ‘*comes limitis Aegypti*’. As such, it is a source of primary importance both for military historians of early Byzantine Egypt and for students of the geography of this part of the country.

Another semi-literary source of primary importance concerning the geography of Egypt is found in the so-called *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti* (hereafter: *Itin.Ant.*), more especially pp. 151-171 in the edition by P. Wesseling, the basis of later editions.¹ This part of the itinerary (in its present form dating from ca. 300 A.D.) contains a list of place names in Egypt with the distances between the various stops.

Since the 18th century certain place names occurring in the *Not.Dig.* have been identified with similar names occurring in the *Itin.Ant.* or vice versa. In some cases, however, twentieth-century publications of papyrological sources have shown that such identifications are least questionable.²

In an interesting paper R.W. Price has dealt with the geographical and military aspects of Or. § 28 of the *Not.Dig.*³ Most of his findings are convincing enough, esp. his suggestion to transfer the contents of ll. 37-39 to a place between ll. 24-25 or 25-26 (cf. Price, 152, n. 7). If this suggestion is taken over, the following picture of the military units mentioned in the ‘*laterculum minus*’ (§ 28.23ff.) emerges:

Aegyptus:

alae at Terenuthis and possibly also at Nea (ll. 24-25; cf. below); *cohorts* at Cephro and Busiris (ll. 35-36);

Augustamnica:

alae et Thaubastis, Tacasiria, Scenae Mandrae, Selle, Rhinocorura, Scenae extra Gerras, Scenae Veteranorum (ll. 38-39, 26-30); *cohorts* at Naithu, Thou, Castra Iudaeorum (ll. 40-42);

Arcadia:

alae at Thmoinepsis, Hipponos, Psobthis, Dionysias (ll. 31-34); *cohorts* at Aphrodite, Alyi, Muson, and Narmuthis (ll. 43-46).

Most of these place names are attested well enough, with each name confirmed by at least two independent sources; one finds the pertinent papyrological and (para-)literary evidence in A. Calderini - S.Daris, *Dizionario dei nomi Geografici e Topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano*.⁴ Only

¹ The most recent edition of this work is given by O. Cuntz, *Itineraria Romana*, I (Liepzig 1929). Pp. 151-171 Wesseling correspond with pp. 21-23 Cuntz.

² Cf. the case of Papa (*Itin.Ant.* 159.4 Wesseling) /Pampane (*Not.Dig.* Or. § 31.52), now to be separated from each other; see S. Timm, *Das Christlich-Koptische Ägypten*, IV 1822-23 s.n. Pampane.

³ *The Limes of Lower Egypt*, in: *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum*. Papers presented to the conference at Oxford, December 13 - 15, 1974, ed. by R. Goodburn and P. Bartholomew, BAR Suppl. Ser. 15 [1976]. Cited here after as ‘Price’ with page number.

⁴ S.nn. Aphrodito (§ 28.43): I.2 292f. # 3; Busiris (§ 28.36): II 66 # 2, Suppl. 85; Dionysias (§ 28.34); II 107, Suppl. 96; Hipponos (§ 28.32): III 32; Castra Iudaeorum (§ 28.42): III 84; Cephro (§

very few of them could until now not, or at least not without reservations, be further identified;⁵ it is especially these, of course, which deserve our further attention. Below, I wish to concentrate on an enigmatic place name, Tacasiria (*Not.Dig. Or. § 28.39*). At the same time I present a few notes on some other place names occurring in *Not.Dig. Or. § 28*, viz. Parembolē, Nēē, Hipponos and Aiy. These are, to be sure, only marginalia to Price's fundamental study.

Tacasiria is identified usually with the place called *Tacasarta* in *Itin.Ant.* 163.1.⁶ Though the variants TACASIRIA / TACASARTA can be explained palaeographically rather easily in terms of one name maltreated by a scribe, this direct identification is not entirely compelling. In fact, after checking first, whether behind these name forms some Egyptian name could be hidden⁷ I have come to suppose that *Tacasarta* may be a misspelling of what originally was *Ta Kastrā* (Τὰ Κάστρα) and that this might be identified with a place more elaborately called *Castra Iudaeorum* in *Not.Dig. Or. § 28.42*. For the equation: '*Tacasarta = Ta Kastrā = Castra Iudaeorum*' I refer to two passages in *Itin.Ant.*, 162.5 - 163.5 and 169.2 - 170.4, where the ancient route between Pelusion (east of Port Said) and *Memphis* (South of Cairo) and the route between *Babylon* (=Old-Cairo) and *Clysma* (= Suez) is given. If one compares the two routes, their western part shows a striking similarity, though at the same time there is an important difference. In order to clarify this I list the description of each route as if starting out from about the same place at the Nile, i.e. the Memphis/Babylon region.⁸

Itin.Ant. 163.5 - 162.6
Memphis - Pelusium

(Memphis) - Helius	mp XXIII
Scenas Veteranorum	mp XIII
Thou	mp XXVI
Tacasarta	mp XIII
Dafno	mp XVIII
Pelusium	mp XVI

169.2 - 170.4
Babylon - Clysma

(Babylon) - Helius	mp XII
Scenas Veteranorum	mp XVIII
Vico Iudaeorum	mp XII
Thou	mp XII
Hero	mp XXIII
Serapiu	mp XVIII
Clysma	mp L

28.35): III 115-16; Muson (§ 28.45): III 307; Naithu (§ 28.40): III 316; Narmuthis (§ 28.46): III 318, Suppl. 202; Nēē (§ 28.25): No entry?; Rhinocorura (§ 28.28): IV 228; Selle (§ 28.27): IV 280; Scenae Mandrae (§ 28.26): IV 290; Scenae extra Gerasa (§ 28.29): IV 290; Tacasiria (§ 28.39): IV 339; Terenuthis (§ 28.24): IV 394; Thaubastis (§ 28.38): II 239; Thmoinēpsi (§ 28.31): II 285, Suppl. 145; Thou (§ 28.41): II 293; Psobtheos (§28.33): V 175 # 8. For the last place cf. now also the remarks in P.Oxy. LV 3793.9n. Cf. also the pertinent references in S. Timm, *op.cit.* (n.2).

⁵ Cf. Price, *loc.cit.*, 152-153, n.8.

⁶ Cf. Price, *loc.cit.* 153 n. 8.f.

⁷ With negative result. I wish to thank Mr. K. Donker van Heel from Leiden University for his kind help in this matter.

⁸ Therefore, I had to reverse the order of names in *Itin.Ant.* 162.6 - 163.5.

Ancient Name	Modern Name ⁹
Heliopolis	= Tell Hisn near El Matariya
Scenae Veteranorum	= Shibin el-Qanâtir (or Tell el-Jehudije?)
Vicus Iudaeorum	= Tell el-Jehudije or Bilbeis?
Thou	= Tell el-Shuqafiya, near Tell el-Kebir
Heronpolis	= Tell el-Mashkuta / Pithoum ¹⁰
Tacasarta	= Castra Iudaeorum = Tell el-Jehudije/Bilbeis?
Dafne	= Kom Dafana
Serapeum	= Near Gebel Maryam
Clysmas	= Suez
Pelusium	= Tell el-Farama

One sees that in the Itinerary there is a stop on the road *Babylon - Clysmas* between *Scenae Veteranorum* and *Thou* at the *Vicus Iudaeorum* which does not occur in description of the route *Memphis - Pelusium*. This seems rather remarkable: why would not one have made a stop, regardless of whether one travelled from *Pelusium* to *Memphis* via *Thou* or from *Babylon* to *Clysmas* via *Thou*?¹¹

If one argues that the various road descriptions should reflect uniformity, and if one accepts the equation *Tacasarta = Ta Kastras = Castra Iudaeorum*, that question is easily solved. At the same time, however, if *Tacasarta = Ta Kastras* is identical with the *Castra* (or, for that matter, *Vicus Iudaeorum*),¹² one has to accept the consequence, that the name of *Tacasarta* in the sequence given in *Itin.Ant.* 162.6 - 163.5 is standing at the wrong place and that its position vis-à-vis *Thou* should be reversed, while the indication of 'mp XIII' should be taken to refer to the distance *Thou - Tacasarta* and the indication of 'mp XXVI' to the distance *Tacasarta - Scenae Veteranorum*, rather than to the distance *Thou — Scenae Veteranorum*. One would, therefore, have to read *Itin.Ant.* 162.6 - 163.3 as follows:

Dafno	mp XVI
Thou	mp XVIII
Tacasarta	mp XIII
Scenae Veteranorum	mp XXVI

(One might consider transposing not only the names, but also the distances in *Itin.Ant.* 163.1-2, but that is of minor consequence.)

On the other hand, it may seem unduly rash to assume a textual corruption in *Itin.Ant.*, to be remedied by a (equally assumed) transposition of lines. Is it absolutely necessary to assume that the descriptions of the two journeys were given in identical terms for the same parts of the roads?

⁹ Some of these identifications are subject to discussion, cf. E. Kettenhofen in *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 20 (1989) 77 nn.15-18. Kettenhofen adds to his paper two maps of the region under review.

¹⁰ For this place see now the exhaustive study by E. Kettenhofen in *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 20 (1989) 75-97.

¹¹ The missing stop was also noticed by E. Kettenhofen, loc.cit. 78 n.19, but he did not pay further attention to this, probably because it laid outside the scope of his article.

¹² On 'castrum' = 'vicus' see *BAR Supplementary Series* 15 (1976) (supra n.3) 134-35. The discrepancy between the two names can be explained by thinking of route descriptions composed by different people which were not made uniform by the original 'editor' of the *Itin.Ant.* On this cf. also below.

Given the variant distance indications for certain identical parts of both journeys (cf., e.g., the distance between *Heliopolis - Scenea Veteranorum*) one may assume that these distances originated from different road descriptions and were not made uniform by the final editor of the *Itin.Ant.* Moreover, if we suppose that for travellers from Pelusium towards Memphis the next stop after Daphne were at Thou, we would have to accept that these people had to make a rather long march through the desert (in fact, this is ca 36 miles, i.e. twice as much as would have been indicated in the Itinerary)¹³ without any resting place in between. Though one could compare the length of the journey between the Serapeum and Clysma (50 miles) and though manuscript errors in the indications of distances in the Itinerary are not infrequent,¹⁴ such a scenario does not seem appealing. In fact, it seems more attractive, then, to reckon indeed with a stop, possibly in El-Salhieh (almost halfway between Tell el-Kebir and Kom Dafana on the ancient caravan route towards Syria, as the map in Baedeker tells us).¹⁵ Of course, such a stop could have been made at a local military post, hence an *independent* homonymous place name *Ta Kastrā* = ‘The Camp’ could have come into use.

What then of *Tacasiria* in *Not.Dig. Or.* § 28.39? Like in the case of *Tacasarta* I suppose that this name may reflect another name and that behind *Tacasiria* an original form *Ta Kaisareia* (Τὰ Καισάρεια) is hidden. In principle one would be dealing, then, with the name of a camp somewhere in *Aegyptus Augustamnica* which is still unidentified.¹⁶ But it cannot be excluded, of course, that, after all, this is the very name of a camp supposedly situated half way in between Thou and Daphne. In that case, an identification ‘*Tacasarta* = *Tacasiria*’ can be maintained. The character, however, of such an identification is different from its supposed earlier counterpart, as this identification would be only ‘indirect’.

Parembole (1. 19): such a place name occurs in the *Itin.Ant.* 161.2, 16 miles from Contra-Syene on the left bank of the Nile. The pertinent entry in the *Dizionario Geografico* (IV 53 #3) states that this was indeed the ‘luogo di stanza’ of the Legio II Traiana in *Not.Dig.* § 28.19. On the other hand, S. Timm (*op.cit.* IV 1843) supposes that the camp of Parembole should be looked for in the village Parembole in the Aphroditopolite Nome; he compares SB I 4672.8. In spite of these scholarly opinions one should, of course, interpret the reference in the *Not.Dign.* as pertaining to the military garrison of and barracks at Alexandria, cf. already Price, 145, 147, and D. v. Berchem, *op.cit.* (n. 16) 62. J. Ball states:¹⁷ ‘It is remarkable that Alexandria is nowhere mentioned in the *Notitia*’. This is, of course, literally correct, but Parembole constitutes at least an indirect reference to the ancient metropolis in the *Notitia*.

Nee (1. 25): Price, 153, rightly considers Seeck’s emendation to ‘Arsinoe’ as improbable on palaeographical grounds, while he does not wish to accept v. Berchem’s idea that ‘Nee’ stands for Neapolis (in Alexandria); in view of the ‘paucity of units of the *laterculum minus* either in Aegyptus or in cities generally’ he thinks that Nee’s identification with an otherwise unknown Nea

¹³ Cf. J. Ball, *Egypt in the Classical Geographers*, Cairo 1942, 141, sub ‘4’, right hand column.

¹⁴ Cf. Ball, *op.cit.*, 148ff.

¹⁵ I use the English edition of Baedeker’s *Egypt*, 1929⁸. H. Kees, PW-RA IV.A col. 1985, supposed that such a stop could be found at Fakous, i.e. to the West of El-Salhieh. But this would produce a rather uneven split in the whole journey between Tell-el Kebir and Tell Defenneh, and in order to reach Fakous a traveller would have had to leave the caravan route.

¹⁶ Price, 153 n.8.f, remarks correctly that an identification of *Tacasiria* with Taposiris, West of Alexandria (cf. D. v. Berchem, *L’armée de Dioclétien et la réforme de constantiniennne* [Paris 1954] 65), is excluded, as this entails that *Tacasiria* would be situated in *Aegyptus* rather than in *Augustamnica*.

¹⁷ *op.cit.*, 161

(kome)' in *Augustamnica* is 'rather more likely'. But it seems rather unattractive to suppose that, while most of the camps listed in § 28 can be identified without any problem with place names mentioned in other sources,¹⁸ here one would be dealing with a village otherwise completely unknown. Furthermore, his objection against v. Berchem's proposal on the grounds of 'paucity of units' etc. does not seem decisive. After all, if one located 'Nee' in *Augustamnica*, next to two cohorts only one ala would be left in the 'laterculum minus' for the defence of Aegyptus. Therefore, I prefer not to minimize the military occupation of *Aegyptus* more than absolutely necessary and, while comparing the case of Parembolē '=' Alexandria (cf. above), I think that v. Berchem's proposal to identify Nee with Neapolis can be accepted.

Hipponos (1. 32): a new attestation of this camp¹⁹ turns out to occur in a papyrus published already 15 years ago, i.e. P.Vindob.Tandem 19.i.8, where it was not recognized by the first editors.²⁰ I am grateful to my colleague Dr. H. Harrauer (Vienna) for checking and confirming my proposal to correct καστρ () Ἰάσωνος into καστρ () Ἰππῶνος. At the same time it may be remarked that thanks to Dr. Harrauer's efforts the reading in 1.9 of the same papyrus can now also be improved, as one should read καστρ () Ἀλυῖδ (ἰνδ.) rather than καστρ () ἁ ὑπὲρ (ἰνδ.). This means that now one is dealing with the Egyptian place name *Alyi* attested to date only in the *Itin.Ant.* 168.3, with a variant in the *Not.Dig. Or.* § 28.44, Aiy.²¹

Amsterdam

K.A. Worp

¹⁸ For an exception, however, see above, Tacasiria.

¹⁹ Cf. the *Dizionario Geografico* III 32 and S. Timm, *op.cit.* III 1207 for other attestations. It was identified by J. Ball, *op.cit.* 161, with 'Ezbet Qarâra.

²⁰ The same papyrus, i.6-7, mentions a καστρ () Θμοινέψει, cf. *Not.Dig. Or.* § 28.28: Thinnepsi).

²¹ Opposite Geziret el-Wahlîya according to J. Ball, *op.cit.* 161.