

J. DAVID THOMAS

DIOCLETIAN'S BIRTHDAY AND DATE OF ACCESSION:  
P.MICH. INV. 5298A RECONSIDERED

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 128 (1999) 161–164

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn



DIOCLETIAN'S BIRTHDAY AND DATE OF ACCESSION:  
P.MICH. INV. 5298A RECONSIDERED

P.Mich. inv. 5298a was published by the late P.J.Sijpesteijn in *ZPE* 106 (1995) 229-230, together with Plate Xa. It was found at Karanis and has a date in the early part of AD 301. Sijpesteijn comments "only the official Annius Diogenes who is mentioned in this text is of interest". In this he was mistaken. If the reconstruction suggested below is correct, this small fragment is only the second papyrus (after P.Beatty Panop. 2) to record Diocletian's birthday and the date of his accession.

Sijpesteijn's text is as follows:

. . . . .

traces [

μένων ἐπὶ Ἑρμο [

καὶ Σαραπίωνος ἀπ[

ἐπιμελητῶν ἀργυ[ρίου

5 χρημάτων τραπεζ[

Ἄννιου Διογένους [

πρὸ ιβ' Καλανδῶν [

Διοκλητιανοῦ τοῦ π[

ὑπατείας τῶν δε[σποτῶν ἡμῶν Κωνσταντίου καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ τῶν]

10 ἐπιφανεστάτων [Καيسάρων τὸ γ̄ πρὸ]

ἰα' Καλανδῶν Ἰανο[υαρίων

τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου σε [

(δηναρίων) (μυριάδας) ξβ' (δραχμάς) Zσν α [ ἦν καὶ δισ-]

σὴν σοι ἐξεδόκα[μεν

15 (ἔτους) ιζ' / ις' / καὶ θ' / Φαμε[νὼθ

Sijpesteijn, in the note to line 8, comments on the fact that Diocletian seems to be mentioned without his co-ruler Maximian. He wonders whether one should supplement here π[ατρὸς τῶν βασιλέων, but rejects this. He is certainly right to do so: the expression is quite impossible in a document which belongs in AD 301. The correct solution, as can be seen from line 12, is that in both places Diocletian is being referred to as the *Senior Augustus*, ὁ πρεσβύτερος Σεβαστός. This description of him occurs on several occasions in P.Beatty Panop. 1 and 2. In P.Beatty Panop. 1 it is used with reference to his projected visit to Panopolis in AD 298 (a visit which he made without his fellow emperor). These occurrences are not relevant to the Michigan papyrus; but the occurrences in P.Beatty Panop. 2 are, I suggest, almost exact parallels. They are to be found in instructions from the procurator concerning payments to the army.<sup>1</sup> One example will suffice (lines 168-175):

Αὐρήλι[ο]ς Ἰσίδωρος ἐπίτροπος τῆς κατωτέρω Θηβαίδος Ἀπολιν[αρίω στ]ρατηγῶ καὶ  
ἀποδέκταις χρημάτων Πανοπολίτου χαί(ρειν). τοῖς ὑπὸ Εὐ-  
δαίμονα ἔπαρχον ἱπεῦσιν εἴλης β' Ἑρκουλίας δρομεδαρίων δι[ακειμέ]νοις ἐν Τοετῶ  
καὶ Ψινάβλα φροντίσατε ἐξοδιάσαι ὑπὲρ δωνατίου  
τῆς πρὸ ιβ' Καλανδῶν Δεκεμβρίων κρατήσεως τοῦ δεσπότου ἡμ[ῶν Δι]οκλητιανοῦ τοῦ  
πρεσβυτέρου Σεβαστοῦ τῆς εὐτυχεστάτης ζ καὶ

<sup>1</sup> On the payment of donatives and *stipendium* to the troops at this period see Roland Delmaire, *Largesses sacrées et res privata* (Coll. écol. fr. de Rome 121; 1989), 535ff., esp. 536, 551 and 555.

ζ̄ ὑπατείας τῶν δεσποτῶν ἡμῶν Διοκλητιανοῦ καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ Σεβαστῶν δηναρίων  
 μυριάδας πέντε καὶ τρισχειλίας ἑπτακοσίας  
 πενήκοντα ἄττικάς, καὶ ὑπὲρ δωνατίου τῆς πρὸ δέκα μιᾶς Καλα[νδῶν Ἰ]ανουαρίων  
 γενεθλίου τοῦ αὐτοῦ δεσπότη ἡμῶν Διοκλητιανοῦ  
 τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου Σεβαστοῦ τῆς αὐτῆς ὑπατείας δηναρίων μυριάδας [πέντ]ε καὶ τρισχει-  
 λίας ἑπτακοσίας πενήκοντα ἄττικάς, ὁμοῦ  
 τὰς συναγομένας δηναρίων μυριάδας δέκα καὶ ἑπτακισχειλίας [πεντ]ακοσίας ἄττικάς,  
 καὶ ταύτας παραδοῦναι Πετεησίῳ (δεκαδάρχῳ) ὀπινι-  
 ἄτορι καὶ ἄποχα δέξασθ[αι] παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῇ ἀπαριθμήσει γράμματα.

This parallel is, I believe, sufficient to prove that the Michigan text is referring in lines 7-8 to the date of the accession of Diocletian, the senior Augustus (20 November), and in lines 11-12 to the date of his birthday (22 December). I suggest we can go further and treat the text as a receipt of the type referred to in the passage quoted from P.Beatty Panop. 2, no doubt one issued by an opiniator for the payment of donatives due to a particular unit of soldiers on each of these occasions. Unfortunately there is to the best of my knowledge only one published papyrus containing receipts of this kind, SB XVIII 13852 of AD 309.<sup>2</sup> This contains no fewer than three such receipts, but they are all very imperfectly preserved. What is clear is that they were issued to a strategos/exactor by an opiniator and concerned payments in money authorised by some higher official, most probably a procurator; it is not clear whether they were donatives for a specific occasion or, perhaps more probably, instalments of regular pay.

If this general assumption about the Michigan text is correct, I would suggest the following reconstruction (which is naturally in several places only tentative). The papyrus has been returned to Cairo,<sup>3</sup> and I am very grateful to Traianos Gagos for the care with which he has examined for me the photograph and the negative of the papyrus possessed by the University of Michigan; in a few places these help with the reading much more than the plate in *ZPE* 106.

	A[ὐρηλίῳ (name) στρατηγῷ Ἀρσινοίτου παρὰ	]
	traces [	διακει-]
	μένων ἐν Ἑρμοῦ[πόλει χαίρειν.	]
	καὶ Σαραπίωνος ἀγ[ορανομ-	]
5	ἐπιμελητῶν ἀρ[	δημοσίων]
	χρημάτων τραπεζ[ιτῶν	]
	Ἀννίου Διογένους τ[οῦ διασημοτάτου ἐπιτρόπου ὑπὲρ δωνατίου τῆς]	
	πρὸ ιβ̄ Καλανδῶν [Δεκεμβρίων κρατήσεως τοῦ δεσπότη ἡμῶν]	
	Διοκλητιανοῦ τοῦ π[ρεσβυτέρου Σεβαστοῦ τῆς εὐτυχεστάτης γ̄]	
10	ὑπατείας τῶν δε[σποτῶν ἡμῶν Κωνσταντίου καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ τῶν]	
	ἐπιφανεστάτων [Καισάρων (amount) καὶ ὑπὲρ δωνατίου τῆς πρὸ]	
	ιᾱ Καλανδῶν Ἰανο[υαρίων γενεθλίου τοῦ δεσπότη ἡμῶν Διοκλητιανοῦ]	
	τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου Σεβ[αστοῦ τῆς αὐτῆς ὑπατείας (amount)	]
	(δηναρίων) (μυριάδας) ξβ̄ (καὶ) ΖϞν ἀτ[τικὰς	]
15	σὴν σοι ἐξεδόμεθα [	]
	(ἔτους) ιζ̄/ ις/ καὶ θ/ Φαμε[νὼθ	

<sup>2</sup> P.Giss. inv. 126 recto, a text which I originally published in *YCS* 28 (1985) 115-125. P.Oxy. I 43 recto (295) contains a series of receipts from military officers to epimeletai for payments which they have received, but is not comparable in format.

<sup>3</sup> Sijpesteijn's edition was based on a photograph.

‘To Aurelius [... strategos of the Arsinoite from ... of the troops ... ] stationed in Hermopolis, [greetings. We have been paid] ... and Sarapion, former agoranomos(?) ... epimeletai of the Arsinoite(?) [by] the bankers of the public funds [of the said nome in accordance with your warrant(?) according to the orders of] Annius Diogenes, [*vir perfectissimus*, on behalf of the donative] for the 20 [November for the accession of our master Diocletianus the senior [Augustus, in the most fortunate 3rd] consulship of our masters [Constantius and Maximianus the] most noble [Caesars, ... ; and on behalf of the donative for the] 22 December [for the birthday of our master Diocletianus] the senior Augustus [ in the same consulship ... making a total of] 62 myriads of denarii and 7950 Attic drachmas; [and] we have delivered to you [this receipt in ... copies ...’

‘Year 17, 16 and 9, Phamenoth ...’

1 Gagos reports that above the first line recorded by Sijpesteijn there is one, and only one, further line, with a large alpha projecting into the left margin (aligned with the symbol for ἔτους in line 16). This observation has resulted in a change of line numbers from those in the *editio princeps*. As Gagos remarks, the alpha must be the start of the address, and we can therefore confidently restore Α[ὐρηλίω. The addressee at this date, whom we know from line 15 to have been in the singular, can hardly have been anyone other than the strategos (cf. SB 13852 and the passage cited from P.Beatty Panop. 2). The strategos in AD 300 was Aurelius Heron, but at some point between then and 305 the strategos was Aurelius Achilleus also called Ptollarian: see G.Bastianini, J.Whitehorne, *Strategi and Royal Scribes*, 55-56.

2-3 One expects here a description of the unit, but the traces remaining in line 2 are too slight to permit any firm reading. Gagos remarks that the letters just before the break resemble μου[, which perhaps suggests ἀριθμοῦ, referring to the unit. Towards the middle of the fourth century we know that *equites Mauri scutarii* were stationed at Hermopolis, see P.Oxy. LXIII 4381.3-4n., and it has been suggested that in the later third century *equites Marcomanni* were stationed there.<sup>4</sup>

If the text as a whole has been interpreted correctly, we can be confident of reading/restoring διακε[ι]μένων. This is always followed in such contexts by ἐν and the name of a place, not ἐπί as given in the *ed.pr.* Gagos confirms the reading ἐν, the supposed iota being in fact a trace of ink descending from the preceding line.

4 ἀγ[ορανομ]- Gagos comments that the letter before the break is much more like this writer's gamma than his pi (cf. Διογένους in line 7). This suggests to me that we probably have a description of Sarapion as an agoranomos or ex-agoranomos (a patronymic is of course another possibility). Epimeletai are often also councillors and sometimes magistrates or ex-magistrates, e.g. P.Oxy. XXXVI 2766.

5 Sijpesteijn read ἐπιμελητῶν ἀργυ[ρίου], but remarked that the expression was otherwise unattested. The ἐπιμεληταὶ ἄσῆμου to whom he refers are not in fact comparable, nor are the ἐπιμεληταὶ χρυσοῦ. While, therefore, ἀργυ[ρίου] is a possible reading, it is not attractive. Gagos reports the reading ἀρ as certain but believes the letter following could as easily be sigma as gamma and that it may be followed by a mark of abbreviation. This leads me to wonder whether we should read Ἄρσ[ι]νοίτου (or Ἄρσ[ι]νοίτου) []; cf. the ἐπιμεληταὶ Ὀξυρυγγίτου occurring in P.Oxy. I 43 recto and VIII 1115.10.

It is somewhat unexpected to find epimeletai mentioned here. Epimeletai are attested in a number of papyri in connection with payments to troops, but always the payments are in kind, never cash.<sup>5</sup> Similarly when we find epimeletai and an opiniator acting jointly in P.Oxy. XVII 2114, they are concerned with the supply of wine for troops. Note that in every instance in P.Beatty Panop. 2 the procurator gives his instructions to the strategos and to apodektai (see the quotation above) and epimeletai are never mentioned in this connection. It is also surprising to find epimeletai occurring at this point. In SB 13852 the military officers acknowledge receipt of the money directly from the public bankers, and in the receipts listed in P.Heid. IV 323, introd., the recipients acknowledge in a similar way receipt of payment from bankers.<sup>6</sup> We should therefore have expected in the present text ἡριθμήμεθα παρὰ τῶν τοῦ νομοῦ δημοσίων χρημάτων τραπεζιτῶν, *vel sim.* Why epimeletai should have been mentioned before the reference to the public bankers is unclear. Is it perhaps to be connected with the fact that the money has been paid out by bankers in the Arsinoite which was in the Heptanomia, but is to be given to soldiers stationed in Hermopolis which was at this date (see P.Beatty Panop., pp. xv-xx) in the Lower Thebaid? An alternative interpretation of the papyrus, taking the receipt as having been issued by epimeletai and not by military officers (reading παρὰ ... ἐπιμελητῶν ... χάριεν), does not suit

<sup>4</sup> See M.P.Speidel, *ANRW* II.3 (1975) 223-4, quoting BGU XI 2074 of AD 286/7, which refers to the payment of wine to Μαρκομάννων ἱππε[ῶ]σιν (ii.5). But the fact that the papyrus was found at Hermopolis does not prove that the units mentioned in it were stationed there; in ii.3 there is a reference to soldiers ἐν Ἄρα[βί]α διακειμένοις (though the meaning of Arabia in this context is unclear).

<sup>5</sup> For P.Oxy. I 43 recto see above, n.2; cf. also P.Oxy. VIII 1115, P.Stras. VII 617 = ChLA XIX 684, O.Fay. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Except for P.Antin. I 39, where the money has been paid by a hypodektes (and the bankers are not mentioned).

- the suggested reading διακει]μένων in lines 2-3 and is surely impossible in view of the occurrence in lines 5-6 of the public bankers.
- 6 The lacuna may have contained the words ἐξ ἐπιστάλματός σου (i.e. the strategos) κατὰ κέλευσιν.
- 7 On Annius Diogenes, procurator of the Heptanomia, see Sijpesteijn's introductory comments.
- 9-11 As Sijpesteijn remarked, given the date of the papyrus, the third consulship of Constantius and Galerius, AD 300, is the only realistic possibility. This is confirmed now that we see the papyrus refers to payment in February/March 301 of donatives due in November and December 300.
- 12 One expects τοῦ αὐτοῦ δεσπότης ἡμῶν, as in the passage quoted from P.Beatty Panop. 2, but the line is already long.
- 14 I take this amount to be the total of the sums paid for the two separate donatives. The reading is not in doubt as far as the beta, but is uncertain thereafter. Sijpesteijn took the spiral mark following to be the symbol for drachmas, but such a combination of denarii and drachmas would be unparalleled. In P.Beatty Panop. 2 the number of myriads of denarii is often followed by a number of ἀττικάί (cf. the passage quoted above).<sup>7</sup> Gagos reports that ἀτ[ is a possible reading, with ατ ligatured as in χρημάτων (line 6). In the amount he reads sampi for Sijpesteijn's sigma.
- 15 σὴν σοι ἐξεδόμεθα: Sijpesteijn read ἐξεδώκα[μεν, but this is improbable as the verb is always in the middle in comparable contemporary texts. Gagos is confident that the correct reading is ἐξεδόμεθα. For the occurrence of more than one military officer in connection with the receipt of such payments cf, e.g., P.Beatty Panop. 2.166. Before σοι Sijpesteijn suggested restoring δις]σὴν, but admitted that it was only *exempli gratia* and that the number of copies could have been higher. Indeed, as many as seven are attested (CPR V 6.13). Lines 9-11 of P.Heid. 323A read τὴν δὲ ἀποχὴν ταύτην ἔ σοι ἐξεδόμην, τοῖς δὲ τραπεζίταις μοναχὴν, καὶ ἐπερω(τηθεὶς) ὄμο(λόγησα). If the present text was identical (substituting plural for singular), we should supply πεντασ]σὴν.<sup>8</sup>
- 16 After this line there is a blank space of some 2 cm. This suggests that the papyrus did not include the expected subscription by the officials who had received the money. In which case we are no doubt dealing with a copy of the original receipt.

University of Durham

J. David Thomas

<sup>7</sup> On the meaning of ἀττικάί see P.Beatty Panop. 2.30-31n. and Roger S.Bagnall, *Currency and Inflation in Fourth-Century Egypt*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> For the form see P.Heid. 323C.12n.