DEKAPROTOI AND EPIGRAPHAI

In a recent article,1 Bagnall has argued that the dekaprotoi served longer terms and were more numerous than has commonly been supposed. These contentions are based principally on evidence from the 290's from Theadelphia and Karanis; it appears that the board of dekaprotoi in charge of paired toparchies in the Arsinoite Nome could have as many as six members at a time, and that the term of office was five years in length, as had been suggested before by Grenfell and Hunt. Further, Bagnall accepted a suggestion of Thomas that the year for which the dekaprotoi were appointed ran from June to June; that is, that it was timed to begin with the harvest and the payment of taxes on the new crop.

In the present note, we wish to explore further the relationship of these conclusions to the tax-collection system in the reign of Diocletian. First, it has recently been argued by Thomas2 that the epigraphe, the tax-schedule, was issued each year in the early summer, at the time of the Egyptian harvest, and thus that insofar as the epigraphe has any chronological sense, it refers to a period from one harvest to another. The term of office of the dekaprotoi, therefore, appears to have been planned to begin at the same time as the epigraphe. This is natural enough, since the dekaprotoi were responsible for collecting the taxes specified in the epigraphe.

Secondly, it seems likely that the five-year term of the dekaprotoi adduced by Bagnall coincided with the five-year epigraphe cycle.3 The evidence may be briefly reviewed: the two villages for which we have a

1 *Aegyptus* 58 (1978), forthcoming.
3 This possibility was raised by Bagnall in the article cited in n.1 supra, but he did not offer a definite conclusion.

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concentration of evidence are Theadelphia and Karanis. In Theadelphia, the same dekaprotoi are attested in charge of the 6th-8th toparchy in 297/8, 298/9, and 299/300. In Karanis, the various dekaprotoi known (4th-5th toparchy) are active from 297/8 to 301/2; one of them is actually attested in every year during this period except 298/9. Now it has recently been argued by Thomas that the epigraphai were probably issued in cycles of five beginning in 287/8 and ending in 301/2, giving thus three cycles. It is evident that the coincidence between the apparent terms of the dekaprotoi and the epigraphai cycles is very striking. It can be proved that the office of dekaproto was abolished in early summer, 302, which is exactly the point at which the third, and probably final, five-year epigraphai cycle ended.

Thirdly, none of the convincing evidence for the five-year term of dekaproto or the 5-6 man board cited in Bagnall's article comes from before 287/8; rather, it is all Diocletianic. The only evidence of any interest before Diocletian comes from P.Teb. II 368 and 581, where an Agathos Daimon is dekaproto of the 2nd toparchy of Polemon in 264/5 and 268/9. It is possible, of course, that this reflects a 5-year term; on the other hand, it may only reflect renomination to a shorter term, such as one year. Since we do not have evidence for the years between nor about his colleagues, we are not entitled to draw conclusions.

Fourthly, there is specific evidence that some change in the nature of the office of the dekaproto occurred around 287. This evidence is P.Oxy. XII 1410, an edict of the catholicus Memmius Rufus in the 290's, which states (lines 5 ff.): τὸν δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ δὲ βασιλέως καὶ ἀρχιερέως ἔχειν τὸν ἰματιστὸν καὶ τὸν ἀρχιμονα

4 The evidence is cited in full in the article mentioned in n.1, supra; only a summary is given here. The years quoted for these dekaprotoi are those of the middle table there, that based on a June-June year in office, to accord with the conclusions quoted above.

5 This is Sarmates.

6 Supra, n.2.

7 For the abolition of the office, see Thomas, BASP 11 (1974) 60-68. As to the coincidence of the epigraphai cycles and the terms of dekaproto, the problem does remain of Philadelphos, who was a dekaproto in 297/8 according to P.Cair. Isid. 38 (we equate year 2 of Domitius Domitianus with 297/8); cf. ZPE 22 (1976) 253-79 and 24 (1977) 233-40. Is he the same as the Philadelphos who signs a receipt for aderatio of grain in P.Cair. Isid. 34, 18, of 21 viii.294? If so, and if he is dekaproto in both texts, the hypothesis advanced in this article must be abandoned. The latter official, however, regretfully does not give his title, and the conclusion that he is a dekaproto is not inevitable. Furthermore, the name Philadelphos is so common that there is a very real possibility that we are here dealing with two different persons. The difficulty of a decision here is illustrated by the fact that another collector, also without title, in P.Cair. Isid. 34, is named Athanasios; a man of that name appears as dekaproto in the Theadelphia texts from 297/8 and later, in a different toparchy. Such identifications are not very secure.

8 The name of the catholicus, damaged in P.Oxy. 1410 (where the editors read it as Magnius Rufus) has been completely preserved in P.Oxy. XXXIV 2717, on which see below. This papyrus also helps give a date for the tenure of office of this man.
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μηκέτι μηδείς είς δεκαπρωτείαν ὄνομαζέτω. ἔρη γὰρ σαύτοις τετηρηθαί το[ι] λοιπὸν ἵνα μή πληρώσαντες αὐτοῖς ἀνθρώπων καλεῖς τοὺς τῆς δεκαπρωτείας ἔριδος λειτουργήματα [αὐτοῖς], "No one is to renominate the dekaproteia from after the 2nd and 1st year to the dekaproteia; for it is necessary for them to be protected in the future from being appointed to the duties of the dekaproteia again after having already fulfilled them." Year 2 and 1 is 285/6. Dekaproteia up to that time are not protected from renomination, but those after that time are. We take ἀπὸς here (τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ β [ἔτους] καὶ α [ἔτους]) to mean "from after," i.e. those appointed after this date. There can be no doubt that this is a possible meaning of ἀπὸς.10 What may cause some surprise is that the catholicus should use an expression which appears to be ambiguous. Now, if our translation is accepted, the catholicus is referring to dekaproteia elected in the year after 285/6, namely 286/7, and it was exactly during this year, towards its end, that the first epigraphic cycle began, and at the same time that new dekaproteia would have been named. The dekaproteia named in early summer, 287, would be the first protected by the edict of the catholicus.

Some support for our view is to be found in the case of Aurelius Demetrianos, known as dekaprotos in the Oxyrhynchite Nome on 12 June 286 (P. Oxy. X 1260), 9 August 297 (P. Oxy. XII 1571), 13 May 299 (P. Oxy. XII 1572),11 and June 299 (P. Oxy. IX 1204). It may be, of course, that we are dealing with two men of the same name; but the name is not common, and it has in fact been possible to delineate the personality of a single person in almost all of the contemporary documents mentioning the name.12 We consider it very likely, therefore, that the same person is meant. In the first of these four texts, Demetrianos is dekaprotos in year 2 = 1. If he is the same man as the dekaprotos in 297 and 299, and if the words τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ β [ἔτους] καὶ α [ἔτους] in the edict of the catholicus are taken to mean inclusive of those who served in year 2 = 1, we can only conclude that the catholicus' instructions were simply disregarded;13 this is in itself a most unlikely conclusion, and since Demetrianos appears several times in our documentation as a nominator whose nominations were contested on grounds of illegality, it is scarcely likely that he himself would have served

9 The editors read 8th and 1st; but see the remarks of Thomas, BASP 11 (1974) 66.
10 See LSJ s.v. II; Wörterbuch IV s.v. col. 222, esp. the reference there to P. Cairo. Z 11 99176.77, ἀπὸ ἡ ἡξος ἡ ἡμερῶν κβ (i.e., the 8th is not included); W. Bauer, Wörterbuch NT 171, citing Luke 2.36, ἐπὶ ἑτερῶν ἀπὸ τῆς μαθητικῆς αὐτῆς, which he translates, "sieben Jahre, seit sie nicht mehr Jungfrau war," Strabo xvii 1.5, of the ἀπὸ τοῦ Πτολεμαίου βασιλείας ἡδονή τοιαύτη, which the Loeb translator is certainly correct in rendering "the kings after Ptolemy [Soter]."
11 As emended in ZPE 8 (1971) 278-81.
12 A list and discussion appears in the article cited in n. 11.
13 Cf. the editor's introduction to P. Oxy. XXII 2343.
for several years unnecessarily. It, on the other hand, our translation of the phrase is adopted, there is no problem, since Demetrios, along with all other dekaprotoi who served in year 2=1, was eligible for renomination.

It is our view that these dekaprotoi were protected from renomination precisely because they were the first to come under the reformed system, where the five-year term, coincident with the epigraphe cycle, was introduced. In what way exactly the duties of the dekaprotoi became heavier, other than the probably longer term of office, we cannot say, for the workings of the epigraphe system are not fully understood. But it is likely that the dekaprotoi had principal responsibility for administering the epigraphe.

Further confirmation may be derived from the date of the catholicus' edict. The exact date is not given in the papyrus as preserved; but P. Oxy. XXXIV 2717 is a receipt for epikephalaien paid τοῦ ἑυετῆτος iω (ἐτους) καὶ [τοῦ ἑτους] καὶ γ (ἐτους) of Diocletian, Maximian and the Caesars, or 294/5, ἀκολούθως τοῖς κέλευθος σε οὐπο τοῦ διασημοτάτου καθολικοῦ [κοῦ] Memmius Rufus, "in accordance with the orders of the most illustrious catholicus Memmius Rufus." The date of Memmius Rufus as catholicus is thus securely pinned to 294/5, though we cannot say for how long on either side of this date he served in office. The date is, however, in rather close proximity to the time when the question of renomination to the dekaprotaia would have arisen for the first time after 287, namely in the spring of 292. No one who was dekaproto after 287 would have come up for renomination until the expiration of his term in 292. The language of the last fragmentary sentence of the edict of Memmius Rufus suggests that in some cases reappointment had already taken place; the date is therefore probably after early summer, 292. It seems to us a justifiable inference that the edict was aimed at the first occasion when abusive renomination could have occurred.

P. Oxy. IX 1204 might seem at first sight to be in conflict with the views here expressed, since it relates to nomination to the office of dekaproto in

14 Protest against illegal nomination was regular in all periods, and not least in the late third century. Demetrios appears three times as nominator of men who contested their nominations, two as dekaproto and one as agoranomos (P. Oxy. IX 1204, XXII 2343, XIV 1642).

15 It may also be noted that his appearances in 297 and 299 fall within one of the relevant five-year periods and thus conform to the pattern we propose.

16 The date of 294/5 here may seem insecure, since two of the figures for the regnal year are restored and the editor dots the alpha in the first figure. Thomas has examined the original in Oxford, however, and is of the opinion that the broken letter after iota can hardly be read otherwise than as alpha.

17 διάτησα δὲ ἐκ δευτέρου ἀντίδοτο [α]δος δεκαπτροφεια.
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299, i.e. in the middle of a five-year term of office as suggested above. We must, however, reckon with the possibility that this single nomination was to fill an extraordinary vacancy which occurred during the normal five-year term of office. In fact, the nomination is explicitly said to have taken place on Pauni 30 (line 23), which is certainly much later than the normal date at which dekaprotai for the incoming harvest would have been elected. The text thus makes very good sense if interpreted as concerning an emergency situation caused by an unexpected vacancy.

To summarize: we propose that in early summer, 287, the taxation system of Egypt was in some way reformed through the introduction of an annual epigraphe issued always at this time of year; that the epigraphai were numbered in five-year cycles; that the dekaprotai had prime responsibility for administering the epigraphai; and that they served for five years, a term coinciding with one cycle of epigraphai and starting at the same time of year. This system endured for three cycles exactly, until in the early summer of 302 the office of dekaprotos was abolished and the series of five-year cycles of tax schedules came to an end.18

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18 On the abolition of the dekaprotai, see Thomas, BASP 11 (1974) 60-68.