63. Consulates and Postconsulates

The mass of evidence concerning the use of consular dating in Egypt assembled in CSBE Appendix D² has considerable interest for various questions. One of these is the problem of the dissemination of knowledge of who the consuls for a year were: how did the news, once announced in the capital (for our purposes, Constantinople), travel to the scribes in the metropoleis and villages who prepared the documents which have survived to the present? The question is a large one and in considerable part an unanswerable one, because most of the levels of administration through which such information must have passed are not represented in our documents. The problem deserves to be studied in its entirety, not only for Egypt but for the whole empire.

Our purpose here is more limited; we aim to set out some of the information derivable from the papyri pertinent to this question, in the hope that our remarks will lead a competent scholar to integrate this material into a broader synthesis which we cannot undertake here.

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¹ For the purpose and nature of these notes, see BASP 15 (1978) 233. We cite our own works as follows: CSBE = Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt (Stud.Amst. 8, Zutphen 1978); RFBE = Regnal Formulas in Byzantine Egypt (BASP Suppl. 2, Missoula [MT] 1979); CNBD = “Chronological Notes on Byzantine Documents,” in BASP 15 (1978) 233-46 and following (i.e. the present series of notes).

² Addenda and corrigenda in RFBE 75-79.
A. Overlap of Consulate and Postconsulate

In a certain number of cases, it appears that the last attestation of a postconsular date to the consuls of year \( x \) is later than the first attestation of the consulate of year \( x + 1 \). On examination, the situation turns out to be not so simple as it might appear.

A.D. 319 p.c. Licinius V and Crispus I
   cos. Constantinus V and Licinius Caesar I
   \( P. Col. \) VII 185.17 (21.i)
   \( P. Flor. \) I 60.11 = \( P. Sakaon \) 20 (19.i)

The Columbia papyrus comes from Karanis, the Florentine one from Theadelphia. But the Karanis text is a receipt issued by a resident of the metropolis to the tenant living in Karanis, and it is not clear where it was written. \( P. Flor. \) 60 is a tax receipt written by a bouleutes to a taxpayer in Theadelphia; the writer, as a metropolitan of a high class, should have had current information. At all events, minor local variations in transmission time or personal whereabouts can be responsible for this small overlap.

A.D. 346 p.c. Amantius and Albinus
   cos. Constantius IV and Constans III
   \( P. Lond. \) III 1249.22 (p. 227)
   \( P. Abinn. \) 47.20 (1.v)

The Abinnaeus text is Arsinoite, while the London papyrus is of Hermopolite origin. The small discrepancy can be explained on grounds of the distance between the nomes.

A.D. 396 p.c. Olybrius and Probinus
   cos. Arcadius IV and Honorius II
   \( P. Oxy. \) VIII 1133.1 (24.iii)
   \( SB \) XII 10932.1 (6.iii)

\( SB \) 10932 is a scrap of which the provenance is unknown. The day numeral (Phamenoth 10) is dotted, but Dr. S. Daris assures us that it is certain and that another digit may have followed. It does not seem possible to draw any conclusions on grounds of provenance. It should, however, be noted that \( \upsilon \sigma \rho \tau \varepsilon \iota \alpha \nu \) is restored, and while the resultant 22-letter restoration corresponds well enough with the 24 letters in line 2, \( \mu \epsilon \tau \alpha \tau \eta \nu \upsilon \rho \tau \sigma \tau \varepsilon \omicron \alpha \nu \) would increase the count only to 28, which does not seem impossible. A papyrus in Vienna, in fact, \( P. Vindob. \) inv.G 22067 + 20784 ined. (which Worp will publish with the kind permission of the Austrian National Library), preserves a date to the postconsulate of Olybrius and Probinus, Mesore 1, i.e. attesting the p.c. still on 25.vii.396. The strong likelihood is thus that \( SB \) 10932 should be restored as p.c. and dated to 397. This year thus ceases to be an example of overlap.
NOTES ON BYZANTINE DOCUMENTS, VI

cos. Fl. Ariobindus and Asper  P.Stras. I 1.1 (20.viii)

P.Lond. V 1777 is a receipt from the Oxyrhynchite; most of the phrase [μετὰ τὴν ὑπατίαν] [ηθο]μ is restored, but the length of the restoration in line 4 seems sufficient guarantee of its correctness. (In line 2, we prefer the editor's alternate restoration: [τὸ ἔδραν καὶ Φλα(σιου] Μαξιμιου.) P.Stras. I poses problems. Preisigke restored this Hermopolite text as follows (lines 1–2):

1 [Βασιλείας Φλα(σιου] ν 'Αρισβίντ[ου] καὶ 'Ασπερος τῶν μεγ(ιστῶν) (ἐτούς) . . . .
          Μεσορή κς δ ἡμ(δικτίων).

He dated the text to A.D. 510. Wilcken (Archiv 5 [1913] 252) correctly restored ὑπατίας, which led him to a date of 506; but he pointed out that this date would not agree with the indication. Hohmann suggested therefore μετὰ τὴν ὑπατίαν and referred the text to 435 (Zur Chronologie der Papyrusurkunden, 38; cf. BL I 403), but Preisigke objected that there was no room for this, and he concluded (BL I 403), "ich weiss keinen Ausweg."

Hohmann is certainly right in thinking that we have a reference to the consuls of 434; the indication (confirmed by the very likely partial restoration of the next indication as the fifth in line 9) points to a date in 435, as he said, and given the conflict which results if the papyrus is assigned to 434, we think a date in 435 is almost certain. "Ὑπατίας is then an error for μετὰ τὴν ὑπατίαν (a very common error, cf. CSBE 52–54). P.Oxy. XVI 1879, which also attests the consuls of 434, has no absolute date and presumably comes from later than 7.xi.434, but before the end of the year.

A.D. 441  p.c. Anatolius  P.Mil. I 64.1 (6.xii)
cos. Cyrrus  BGU II 609.1 (12.xi)

BGU 609 is dated to the eleventh indication, thus 442/3 (that is, 12.xi.442). As no papyri for 442 are yet published, it is not possible to say if the consuls of that year (known from a p.c. in P.Oxy. VI 913, cf. Mnemosyne 31 [1978] 289 n. 9) were announced locally during that year. BGU 609 is Arsinoite, while P.Mil. 64 is Oxyrhynchite. As no explanation on grounds of location is possible, it seems likely that the indication is right in BGU 609 (our remarks on p. 54 of CSBE are to be cancelled). But in any case, this pair is not solid evidence for our question. (It should be pointed out that in P.Mil. 64 the p.c. is our restoration in ZPE 28 [1978] 226, but we consider it certain.)
A.D. 462 p.c. Dagalaiphus and Severinus  PSI III 175.1 (20.ix)
cos. Leo II and Fl. [ ] M.Chr. 71.19 (14.vii)

The addition of a second consul in M.Chr. 71 is contrary to the phrase with Leo alone in P.Vindob.Sijp. 7.1 and the p.c. of Leo alone in SPP XX 127 (or both p.c., if, as we suggest in CNBD III 32, P.Vindob.Sijp. 7 belongs to the p.c. also). The time difference here is far too great to make a locational explanation plausible; but the second consul raises doubts which make us unsure of the nature of the problem here. [From a photograph of M.Chr. 71 kindly provided by R. Jäger (Leipzig), we observe that the numeral β (= II) for Leo’s consulate is very dubious. A reading γ, (cos. Leo III = a.d. 466) does not seem excluded; if it is correct, the problem of overlap in a.d. 462 would disappear.]

A.D. 472 p.c. Leo IV and Probinianus  P.Lond. V 1793.2 (1.xii)
cos. Marcianus and to be BGU XII 2150.1 (8.xi)
announced

As both texts are Hermopolite, an argument by location is not possible. But the London text is dated to the tenth indiction (471/2), which would yield a date of I.xii.471, a year earlier than the consulate points to (cf. CSBE 65 n. 15). The only papyrus of 471 is P.Bad. IV 91 b.14 (24.iii), dated to the p.c. of Jordanes and Severus (i.e. of 470). One might surmise that P.Lond. 1793 was mistakenly dated p.c. rather than cos.; in a century when p.c. datings are the rule, the scribe might be pardoned for assuming that any new consuls were already out of office. This, however, is the reverse of the normal error, and we remain uncertain what has happened.

A.D. 476 p.c. Leo Jr. I, deceased  BGU XII 2151.2 (19.x)
cos. Zenon and Armatus SB III 7167.2 (4.x)

Both texts are Hermopolite. SB 7167 is restored as p.c. by the editors (thus 477), as consulate by J. R. Rea, in his note on CPR V 15.1 (which is dated by p.c. Armatus in vi.477). Rea provides a clear discussion of the problems of consular dates in this turbulent period. The restoration of the consulate, however, seems uncertain, as Rea’s restoration for line 2 requires 21 letters, vs. the 29 in the nearest securely restorable line (6). Restoring with the editors μετὰ τὴν ὑπατίαν, on the other hand, gives 28. Given the insecurity of the restoration and the paucity of our knowledge for these years, it seems best to renounce any use of this pair for our question. [P. Köln III 152 brings new evidence to bear on this problem and supports, we believe, our doubts about Rea’s restoration. See the editors’ introduction.]

3 See our remarks in Mnemosyne 31 (1978) 288.
A.D. 534 p.c. Justinianus III
    cos. Justinianus IV
P.Stras. 472.2 (xi–xii)4
SB VIII 9876.1 (16.vii)

SB 9876 is Herakleopolite, P.Stras. 472 Hermopolite; obviously
location will not account for the discrepancy. The postconsulate in the
Strasbourg papyrus is based on restoration. As the editor remarks (note to
line 2), “Cette ligne a dû commencer légèrement plus à gauche que les
suitantes.” Now the projecting to the left of the heading of a papyrus
(address, dating formula) is a common phenomenon, but in this case it
would remove the difficulty of the overlap of consulate and postconsulate if
one restores instead the consulate of 533. The other documents dated to 533
do not form an obstacle to this hypothesis, as the latest document known
from this year is SB14663 (8.x; dated by the postconsulate of the consuls of
530, cf. CSBE 51).

An obstacle is, however, presented by the mention in line 12 of the
coming fourteenth indiction. As the editor aptly remarks in his introduc-
tion, “notre ligne 12 nous renvoie à la 13e indiction (534–535).” P.Stras. 472
contains a lease for two years from the crops of the coming fourteenth
indiction; it is axiomatic that a lease will not begin at a set date without
including the next crop to be harvested.5 As the lease concerns grain land,
the crop of the coming fourteenth indiction should have been sown in the
fall of 534. This would conflict with a hypothetical dating of the papyrus in
533.

We have a choice, then, between the restoration of a postconsulate
which is a bit long and causes the above conflict with SB 9876; or the
restoration of consulate, in which case this conflict is removed, but we are
left with an indiction number which is, by normal practices, unexpected. In
any case, the problem is such that this pair is also not very useful for the
question.

Of the nine cases examined, three (A.D. 396, 476, 534) involve texts
where ἡπιείωσις ὑπὲρ τῆς ἱππείωσις is restored and there may be doubt
about the correctness of the restoration. In three cases (434, 441, 472), the
indiction contradicts the consular date, leading to uncertainty about the
true date of the document. In the case of A.D. 462, the consular formula is

4 The papyrus is dated to Choiax (xi-xii). The name of the month is followed by a
diagonal stroke. A numeral of the day seems to have been omitted, but one wonders if one
should not read όαὶσας κι/ιε, i.e. 20 Choiax = 16/17.xii.
5 Cf. CSBE 9 n. 2; Comfort, Aegyptus 14 (1934) 432 foot; J. Herrmann, Bodenpacht
98. Seemings exceptions are documents in the form of a μαθησιακή, which appear to have
been contracted usually after the point at which a field could be planted for the nearest
harvest: CPR 1247 (7.iv.35, for ind. 10 = 336/7); P.Gen. 66 (2.x.374, for ind. 5 = 376/7); 67
(19.i.382 or 383 [cf. CSBE 52], for ind. 13 = 384/5), and 69 (386; crops of ind. 15 = 386/7);
P.Gron. 9 (20.iv.392, for ind. 7 = 393/4).
aberrant and we cannot be sure what the situation actually is. In only two cases, then (319, 346) do we actually have a certainly observable overlap, by two and four days only, and in both cases the location of the scribe seems easily sufficient as an explanation. We conclude, therefore, that so far as present evidence shows, the dissemination of knowledge of consulates was as uniform throughout Egypt as its geography allows once the news reached the country. It appears, therefore, that the local bureaucracy is not at fault in the cases of tardiness of transmission of the news of the announcement of consuls.

B. The Date of the Announcement of Consulates in Egypt

Within reasonable limits, then, evidence from any part of Egypt can be used for the question of when consulates were announced in that province. The evidence is not so abundant as to allow the pinning of the announcement in most years; the most useful tool seems to be the date of the last attestation of the previous consulate for each year. These dates provide a rough terminus post quem for the announcement of the new consuls; in any given case, new evidence may of course come to move the terminus later. The following tabulation includes years from 314 to 541; in cases where the exact day is not known but the range can be narrowed, the year is listed under the earliest month possible. [Years followed by a or b refer to years in which a p.c. of an earlier year was replaced by a p.c. of the immediately preceding year during the course of the year.]

January: 315, 316, 319, 325, 328, 342, 355, 373, 374, 383? 386, 392, 480, 496a, 500
March: 336, 337, 393, 396, 409, 418, 427, 445, 455, 471, 481a, 498, 503, 535, 540
April: 395, 428, 493, 524
May: 346, 380, 387, 389, 403, 410, 432, 475, 484, 489, 509 (cf. CNBD VII 65 [forthcoming])
June: 399, 400, 407, 417, 423, 448, 458, 477, 531
July: 351, 382, 398, 419, 421, 439, 465, 501, 505, 516
August: 402, 415, 422, 449, 454, 456, 483, 487, 506, 527
September: 412, 434, 435, 461, 462, 470, 486, 488, 510, 526, 532, 541
October: 364, 379, 426, 443, 444, 468, 476, 481b, 491, 504, 514, 533, 537
November: 375, 385, 420, 430, 436, 446, 464, 495, 496b, 508
December: 441, 472, 485, 494, 536

Although no exact reliance can be placed in statistics based on evidence of the sort we possess, the distribution seems sufficiently spread
out to make it clear that the news of the new consuls could arrive at any time of year. A breakdown by centuries, however, clarifies this conclusion:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>IVp</th>
<th>Vp</th>
<th>Vlp</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
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<td>February</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>March</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>April</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that in the fourth century more *termini* fall in January–February than in all other months together, and this picture is consistent with a situation in which the consuls were normally proclaimed near the end of the old Julian year or soon after the start of the new. In the fifth century, on the other hand, the median is between July and August, and in the sixth in July: there is no longer any preference for the early months of the year, quite the reverse in fact. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the news of the new consuls reached Egypt much later than in the fourth century (as the high number of fifth century postconsulates shows in itself) and that the amount of delay followed no observable pattern.

C. Consuls yet to be Announced

In seven years we find in a consular formula the name of a consul plus καὶ τοῦ δηλωθησομένου/ἀποδειχθησομένου or its Latin equivalent. These are the following:

453 p.c. Sporacius καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Ταλλίας δηλωθησομένου

461 p.c. Apollonii et qui nuntiatus fuerit

464 p.c. Vivianus καὶ τοῦ ἀποδ. ἐκ δῆλη.

472 cos. Marcianus καὶ τοῦ ἀποδ.

481 p.c. Basilius καὶ τοῦ ἀποδ.

P. Vindob. Syr. 11.1 (17.i)

P. Oxy. XVI 1878.1 (1.iii)

BGU XII 2147.1 (7.xi)

P. Oxy. VI 902.19 (20.xi) (cf. CSBE 52 n. 4)

BGU XII 2150.1 (8.xi)

P. Lond. III 991 (p. 258) (cf. CNBD IV 40)
BGU XII 2156.2 (27.viii)

501 p.c. Patricius (& Hypatius)  P. Amst. I 45.2 (7.vii)
καὶ τοῦ δήλ.

Similar dates where the name of the first consul is lacking are SPPXX 146 and SB I 5264 (to be republished as P. Amst. I 45a).

In every case except that of 501 we are dealing with a year in which only one consul was proclaimed and recognized in Egypt; in some cases no second consul was proclaimed at all (481, 483). That the missing consul is normally the western one is made clear by P. Vindob. Siph. 11 (despite the erroneous ταύ for τοῦ). In no case do we find later that the second person was proclaimed.

The text of 501, P. Amst. I 45, is a peculiar case. The scribe has written μετὰ τὴν υπατείαν Φλ. Πατρικίου τοῦ μακαλοπρεπεστάτου (1 μεγα λο-) καὶ ενδοστάτου στρατηκοῦ καὶ υπάτου καὶ τοῦ δηλωθήσεταινιν. The scribe has transformed the name of the second consul Hypatius (already known in Egypt on 15.ix.500: P. Oxy. XVI 1962.1) into the title υπάτου, consul (nonsensically: who but a consul would be consul!); he has then felt the need of a second consul and added the “to be designated” phrase.

D. Constantinople vs. Egypt

If the dissemination of consular names within Egypt seems to have been rather uniform, as we have argued, where does the peculiarly even distribution of termini post quem over the julian year in the fifth and sixth centuries come from? One possible approach to the question is through the legal codes. The imperial enactments contained in the Codex Justinianus and Codex Theodosianus mostly have consular dates and month and day. Where these have not been tampered with by the editors of the codes, they provide evidence of at what dates the consulates were known in the imperial court, generally Constantinople in the eastern empire. A few other sources, like records of church councils, give evidence for consulates in some years.  


7 For difficulties in comparing this type of material to papyri and in using it generally, see O. Seeck's introduction to his Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 (Stuttgart 1919) and our remarks in Mnemosyne 31 (1978) 287–93. We depend for this material on Seeck.
The list below includes each year in which the latest reference in the papyri to the postconsulate of the (a) preceding year is two months or more later than the earliest reference in legal sources and similar materials to the consulate of the current year; in this way, all chance that only the time involved in getting news to Egypt is responsible has been eliminated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Latest reference to p.c.</th>
<th>Earliest reference to cos.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>346</td>
<td>ZPE 23 (1977) 139.1 (5.iii)</td>
<td>CTh 10.10.8 (5.v)</td>
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<tr>
<td>364</td>
<td>PSI I 90.1 (17.x)</td>
<td>CTh 13.3.6 (11.i)</td>
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<td>375</td>
<td>P. Lips. 61.1 (11.xi)</td>
<td>CTh 12.6.16 (9.iv)</td>
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<tr>
<td>379</td>
<td>P. Lips. 13.1 (23.x)</td>
<td>CTh 6.30.1 (24.ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td>CPR VII 19.1 (6.v)</td>
<td>CJ 1.54.4 (6.i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>382</td>
<td>SB IV 7445.1 (12.vii)</td>
<td>CTh 14.10.1 (12.i)</td>
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<td>385</td>
<td>P. Lips. 62 ii.17 (4.xi)</td>
<td>CJ 1.55.4 (1-5.i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>387</td>
<td>Aegyptus 54 (1974) 83.1 (28.v)</td>
<td>CTh 13.3.13 (22.i)</td>
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<tr>
<td>389</td>
<td>P. Lips. 37.1 (5.v)</td>
<td>CTh 15.14.8 (14.i)</td>
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<td>395</td>
<td>CPR V 13.28 (17.iv)</td>
<td>CTh 2.1.8 (6.i)</td>
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<td>396</td>
<td>P. Oxy. VIII 1133.1 (24.iii)</td>
<td>CTh 15.13 (6.i)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(cf. supra, p.28)</td>
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<td>P. Herm. 52.1, 53.1 (4.vii)</td>
<td>CTh 7.1.16 (28.i)</td>
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<td>P. Giss. 104.1 (30.vi)</td>
<td>CTh 11.24.4 (10.iii)</td>
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<td>P. Grenf. II 80.1 (4.viii)</td>
<td>CTh 16.5.30 (3.iii)</td>
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<td>P. Oxy. VIII 1122.1 (9.vi)</td>
<td>CTh 6.26.13 (25.i)</td>
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<td>CTh 16.5.48 (21.ii)</td>
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<td>CTh 3.1.9 (17.ii)</td>
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<td>CTh 16.2.43 (3.ii)</td>
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<td>426</td>
<td>P. Oslo II 35.1 (6.x)</td>
<td>CTh 9.41.1, 42.24 (23.i)</td>
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<td>P. Flor. III 314.1 (27.iv)</td>
<td>CTh 6.2.26, 27.22 (31.i)</td>
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<td>430</td>
<td>BGU XII 2138.1 (16.xi)</td>
<td>CTh 10.10.34 (22.ii)</td>
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<td>434</td>
<td>P. Lond. V 1777.1 (7.ix)</td>
<td>CTh 5.12.3, 11.28.15 (18.vi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>435</td>
<td>P. Flor. III 315.1 (ix–x?)</td>
<td>CTh 6.28.8 (29.i)</td>
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<td>PSI VI 708.1 (2.xi)</td>
<td>CTh 10.20.18 (8.iii)</td>
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<td>439</td>
<td>CPR VI 6.1 (8.vii)</td>
<td>Nov. Theod. 7.1 (20.ii)</td>
</tr>
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<td>441</td>
<td>P. Mil. I 64.1 (6.xii) (cf. supra, p. 29)</td>
<td>Nov. Theod. 7.4 (6.iii)</td>
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<td>443</td>
<td>P. Oxy. VI 913.1 (16.x)</td>
<td>CJ 1.46.3 (28.i)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In general, it does not seem possible to argue that all of the wide gaps found are due either to retroactive editorial insertion of consulates in the
codes, or to the time required for transmission of news from Constan-
tinople to Egypt and its local diffusion there. Nor does the season of the
year (i.e. usable for sailing or not) seem an explanation. While all three of
these may account for certain individual instances, the bulk is too large to
admit such explanations. The conclusion that significant delays occurred
in the bureaucracy appears necessary to us. It is our hope that a scholar
competent in Byzantine history and institutions will try to set the
information we have gathered and analyzed into its place in the historical
record.

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8 Cf. O. Seeck’s remarks (supra, n. 7) 15 and his introduction generally. We see no basis
for any suggestion that the scribes of individual papyri varied because of personal whim.