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A Prefect's Edict Mentioning Sacrifice

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Part 1: The Text

The papyrus published and discussed in this article consists of two very scrappy fragments and does not even come close to offering a single complete sentence. Its contents seem nonetheless of sufficient interest to warrant detailed consideration, because the handful of preserved words point to an important and otherwise lost edict mentioning sacrifice published under the Tetrarchy.¹

In 1911 A. S. Hunt published the first volume of papyri in the John Rylands Library of Manchester. Pride of place in this entirely literary volume was given to two fragments of a codex containing the Septuagint text of Deuteronomy.² Hunt recognized that the leaves had been manufactured by pasting together two pieces of papyrus, and he noted that a bit of text on the otherwise hidden side of one of these was visible, giving a date to 293/4. No information was available about the provenance of the papyrus codex. Over the years, more papyrus codices, and two papyrus rolls, manufactured in the same way have come to light, and in 1989 Jean Gascou showed that in all cases where the provenance could be established it was Panopolis.³ He mentions *P. Ryl. 1*, noting that the method of manufacture suggested (but could not prove) a Panopolite provenance; in the absence of access to the hidden text, one could hardly go further.

Since then the conservator of the John Rylands University Library has separated two leaves; the remainder is considered too fragile to take apart. In March, 1998, I was able to study the originals in Manchester and make a preliminary text, subsequently checked against photographs.⁴ It became quickly apparent that we were dealing with fragments of official correspondence, a genre of which Panopolis has famously provided the most extensive specimen in the rolls from which a codex in

¹ Part 1 is by Roger Bagnall, part 2 by James Rives. A draft of part 1 was read by Klaas Worp and a draft of the whole by Timothy Barnes. We owe useful suggestions to both.

² *P. Ryl. I 1* is listed as no. 55 in J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens* (Paris 1976).

³ "Les codices documentaires égyptiens," *Les débuts du codex*, ed. A. Blanchard (Bibliologia 9, Turnhout: Brepols 1989) 71–101. The original conference paper dates to 1985. Gascou also demonstrated that the rolls were cut down to a standard height of about 25 cm before being made into codices. I discuss this subject further in "Public Administration and the Documentation of Roman Panopolis," in A. Egberts and J. van der Vliet, edd., *Perspectives on Panopolis* (Pap. Lugd. Bat., forthcoming).

⁴ I am grateful to Dr Peter McNiven for assistance in providing access to the papyrus, and to the Library for permission to publish the photographs here.

the Chester Beatty Library was formed (*P. Panop. Beatty*), published by T. C. Skeat in 1964. I give first a text and then a discussion of the remains.

P. Ryl. I 1, Fragment A (back of p. 1, col. i of Deuteronomy codex)

 (ἔτους)]ι καὶ ἐνάτου κ[αί] βS/ .[
 vacat
 χ]ρόνοις πέφυκεν χαίρ[ειν
]. θύειν· πῶς γὰρ ο..[
 4]. ς ἀποστεῖλαι ἐπὶ ...[
 ἢ σ]ῆ μεγαλιότης σπουδ[
 (ἔτους) δεκάτου κ]αί θS/ κ]αί βS/ Φαῶφι ιγ[
] traces
]. Τῦβι καθ' Ῥουπίλιος Φ[ῆλιξ
 8]οθεν μείναι κελεύω μέχρι .[
] (ἔτους) δεκάτου καὶ θS/ καὶ βS/ [

1 (also in 9) Year 10 (Diocletian), 9 (Maximian), 2 (Caesars) = 293/4.

2 On the phrasing here, see the commentary below.

3 Before θύειν alpha is more likely than epsilon; neither πληθύειν nor ἰχθύειν (both hardly expected in context; cf. n. 14). The letter after omicron could be either upsilon, in which case one would have οὐ, or delta, in which case omicron might be a definite article.

4 After ἀποστεῖλαι ἐπὶ one would expect the name or title of the person to whom something or someone is to be sent, but I have not succeeded in interpreting the traces that follow here. The first letter could be a tau, but only the very bottom of a vertical stroke is preserved. There is a small piece of papyrus folded out of place immediately after, making the reading of what follows doubtful.

5 On this line, see the commentary below and n. 11.

6 Phaophi 13 = 10 October 293.

7 Tybi 29 = 24 January (294, presumably). For Rupilius Felix, see below.

P. Ryl. I 1, Fragment B (back of p. 2, col. ii of Deuteronomy codex)

]πυρι...ωραις [
] τοῖς τόποις ηπ.[
]ωναί. α. ριδ..[
]vacat
 4] ρήσεις τὸ ὑπομ[
]vacat
] καὶ καταπρασσ.[
]όμενα πειρωμένοις .[
] εως τοῦ μὲν θαν...[.].[
 8] ταῦτα τὰ γράμματα .[
] (ἔτους) δεκάτου καὶ θS/ κ[αί] βS/
]..... ..[

3 Perhaps πατριδ...[, but what precedes does not help establish a suitable context.

4 At the end, perhaps restore ὑπόμνημα, but without knowing what the preceding verb is no restoration can be certain.

5 Presumably a form of καταπράσσω. The last letter looks most like an omega. The verb occurs in the papyri only in *P. Coll. Youtie* II 66.28,31 = *P. Oxy.* XLVII 3366, where the editor translates it as "to provide" a means of subsistence. In Greek prose the verb mostly means to accomplish, achieve, or bring about something; the aorist forms are much more common than the present system. If the last letter is indeed omega, the most likely form may be καταπράσσω[σ].

6 περιώμενος in the papyri generally has unfavorable connotations. That might suggest that the neuter participle preceding it refers to something evil which the writer is denouncing and, no doubt, threatening with punishment.

7 Two possibilities for interpreting these remains occur to me. The first is to read εως as the end of a genitive, preceded perhaps by lambda or sigma, and see τοῦ as the start of a new sentence. The other is to read ἕως, and suppose that a balancing δέ phrase stood later. It is possible to read θανάτ[ο]ν at the end. For ἕως θανάτου, cf. LSJ s.v. ἕως II.1.b, citing the Pergamene inscription *OGIS* I 266.29, where Dittenberger has an illuminating note. This line might in that interpretation be part of a sanction against the evildoing putatively denounced in the previous line.

Fragment A seems to contain parts of three communications. Of the first, only the end of the regnal date survives. Of the second, four lines of text plus the date are preserved. Of the third, apparently a date at the start followed by a brief text and the full date at the end remain. These may seem extremely brief, but it should be remembered that we do not know the line width. In *P. Panop. Beatty* 2, these lines are up to about 150 letters wide. Moreover, it is certainly possible that some extraneous material from the original letter was omitted in the letterbook. Although some letters are very long, others are only a few lines long. Our papyrus is therefore very much in line with the format and character of the letterbook from six years later published by Skeat. It is possible, moreover, that we have a cover letter with the original, forwarded, communication. Fragment B is more difficult to read and rather less sense is preserved of each line than in Fragment A. But again the layout suggests that we have part of three communications, occupying three, one, and five lines respectively. Of the last line there is too little preserved to allow any comment.

No direct evidence establishes the identity of the recipient of these letters. Because all evidence to date for the fabrication of papyrus codices by reusing old rolls of official documents comes from the Panopolite, it is likely that Gasco's tentative attribution to this nome is correct. No high officials were resident in Panopolis in the late third century, and it is therefore likely that the recipient is the strategos of the nome, who was also the recipient of the correspondence of *P. Panop. Beatty* 2.

The author of the third letter is certainly the prefect of Egypt. Rupilius Felix is attested in other documents, but none hitherto has given any exact date.⁵ The closest to one is in *P. Oxy.* XXXIV 2712, where regnal year 9-8, or 292/3, is attested. In principle this text should date before the news of the elevation of the Caesars (1 March 293) reached Egypt; as a date to year 9-8-1 is given in *O. Mich.* I 441 (Arsinoite, 28 May), this will serve as an approximate terminus. We now have a

⁵ See T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass. 1982) 149; *P. Kell.* I Gr. 1.10n.

precise date of 24 January 294, extending Felix's known term by 8 months or more.⁶ The brusque verb *κελεύω* is also appropriate to prefectorial authorship.⁷

It is also likely that Felix is the author of the preceding letter. The term *μεγαλειότης*, used of the letter's recipient in line 5, is applied in official contexts only to emperors, prefects, praesides, and *catholici*.⁸ It is conceivable that we have here an imperial letter written to the prefect and then circulated to *nome strategoi*, but from *P. Panop. Beatty 2* we would rather conclude that imperial enactments were summarized in orders from high provincial officials rather than being transmitted intact by them (lines 299–304 give an example). Whether the praeses is a possibility is unclear; there is no evidence for this office in Egypt before 295, but it is not certain that the office of *epistrategos* still existed in the Thebaid in 293/4.⁹ The most likely situation, therefore, is a letter of the prefect to the *catholicus*,¹⁰ or possibly to the praeses, which is being transmitted to the *strategos* of the *nome* by the lower official. Because the fragmentary *σπουδ[* at the end of line 5 points to instructions being given to Your Highness, it is not possible for the letter to emanate from a lower official or body (cf. further part 2).¹¹

The contents of this letter are evidently fragmentary, but they are not entirely beyond recovery. The first line preserves *πέφυνκεν χαίρειν*, "it is natural to rejoice." The phrase is literary, attested first in Sophocles, *Trachniae* 440, *χαίρειν πέφυνκεν οὐχὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἀεί*: It is natural not always to take pleasure in the same things. The idiom is also found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Philo, and Plutarch.¹² Of these, Sophocles seems far the most likely reading for an official like the prefect, although Plutarch is perhaps not to be excluded. It seems that what one naturally rejoices in is the times, and it may be that we should restore something along the lines of [*ἐν τούτοις τοῖς εὐτυχιστάτοις χρόνοις*]. Such phrases, often with *καίρειν* rather than *χρόνος*, are a commonplace in reference to a particular imperial reign. Compare, for

⁶ It may be worth remarking that the present papyrus calls into question the editor's preference for dating *P. Kell.* 1 to 293, for that was based solely on the likelihood that one of the ordinal numerals was written out in full, and that the numeral in question was *ἐνάτου*, which is written as a word (rather than as a numeral) far more commonly than other numbers; see A. von Stylow and J. D. Thomas, *Chiron* 10 (1980) 537–51. In the Rylands text, *ἐνάτου* is indeed written out in full in line 1, but in line 9 (and perhaps 6), as also in B. 9, we have instead *δεκάτου* written in full and *θ* given as a numeral. It is therefore possible to argue for *δεκάτου* in *P. Kell.* 1 and a date to 294, as the traces of the consulate allow either 293 or 294.

⁷ It is already a hallmark of edicts from the prefect as early as the first century; see, e.g., the edicts of Cn. Vergilius Capito (*OGIS* II 665) and Ti. Iulius Alexander (*OGIS* II 669).

⁸ See *P. Oxy.* XLII 3028.6n.; *CPR* VII 20 adds the praeses.

⁹ See J. David Thomas, *The Epistrategos in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt 2: The Roman Epistrategos* (Pap. Colon. VI.2, Opladen 1982) 64–67.

¹⁰ Referred to by this term in *P. Panop. Beatty* 2.133.

¹¹ Restore *σπουδή*, *σπουδαῖον*, or *σπουδάσειν*, in whatever form. The meaning will be "make haste," "take care," "show zeal," or the like, presumably in executing the orders being given.

¹² Dion. Halic. *Dem.* 39.18 (*τίσιν αὐτῶν ἢ τοιαύτη μάλιστα πέφυνκεν ἀρμονία χαίρειν*); Philo *Spec.* 2.185.3 (*ἐπ' οὐδενὶ δὲ τῶν ὄντων μᾶλλον χαίρειν πέφυνκεν ἄνθρωπος ἢ εὐπορία*); Plut. *Mor.* 1088E6 (*τῶν ὄντων πέφυνκε χαίρειν*), cf. also 30F8 and 1096E9; later also Ps. Athanasius, *Disp. c. Arium*, PG 28, 458. 4f.; Euseb., *Praep. ev.* IV.3.8; Proclus, *In Plat. Tim. com.* III p. 7.22.

example, *P. Kell.* I Gr. 24.8, ἐν τῇ εὐμ[εν]ίᾳ τῶν εἰ[β]τυχεστάτων τούτων καιρῶν.¹³ At all events, the sententious beginning probably is setting the stage for the order that follows.

Of the first part of this, only θύειν survives.¹⁴ A new sentence certainly begins with the highly rhetorical πῶς γὰρ. By the time that text resumes in the next line, an order to dispatch something is being issued, and we then in the following line get an injunction to zealous execution of the matter. But what is this matter? It seems most likely that θύειν is the most significant word of what is preserved.

Of the third letter less survives. We can be certain only that the prefect orders a person or persons to remain (somewhere) or to wait for someone or something.

Part 2: The Context of the Edict on Sacrifice

Despite the extremely fragmentary nature of this text, we may regard a few basic observations as reasonably certain. First, the involvement of the prefect indicates some sort of public celebration involving sacrifice. Secondly, this was probably not a regular festival, since the observance of such occasions would not have required instructions from the prefect. It must therefore have been a special occasion, which at this date would almost certainly be a celebration involving the emperors. Similarly, the phrase “it is natural to rejoice” implies some recent event that provided the reason for rejoicing. There was a wide range of imperial activities that might call for public celebrations: the accessions of new emperors, the recovery of an emperor from illness or his deliverance from danger, military successes, and so forth.¹⁵ Of these various possibilities, three warrant consideration in connection with the text at hand.

The first is the accession of a new emperor. A number of earlier papyri indicate that it was regular for the prefect of Egypt to issue an edict proclaiming an accession and ordering the performance of sacrifices or the observance of other religious festivities.¹⁶ Chronological considerations, however, make it very unlikely that this

¹³ The editor cites (note ad loc.) *PSI* VII 767.32 ἡ τῶν καιρῶν εὐμ[έν]εια. But the idiom goes back much farther, occurring, for example, in Nero's speech freeing the Greeks (*Syll.*³ 814; J. H. Oliver, *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors* [Philadelphia 1989] 573 no. 296), ... ἀνισφορίαν, ἦν οὐδ' ἐν τοῖς εὐτυχεστάτοις ἡμῶν πάντες χρόνοις ἔσχετε (lines 14–15). Here of course it refers to the past, but the Neronian present is compared favorably to even those most favorable times. For further references and bibliography, both papyrological and epigraphical, see A. Papatomas, *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses* (Berlin 1997) 2, 774.

¹⁴ It is perhaps worth remarking that there is no plausible alternative to taking the verb as θύειν (or a compound), as μεθύειν is not a likely choice in such a context. See also above, *ad loc.*

¹⁵ So for example *SEG* XXIII 206 records an edict of the governor of Achaëa proclaiming a thanksgiving for Gaius Caesar's escape from danger. We may also note *P. Giss.* 40, generally considered a Greek translation of the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, in which Caracalla gives thanks to the immortal gods, apparently for having saved him in some unknown way, and then seems to associate in their worship the new citizens he is creating.

¹⁶ The following examples are known to me: 1) *P. Oxy.* VII 1021 = Wilcken *Chrestomathie* 113: a draft proclamation announcing the death of Claudius and the accession of Nero; see further O. Montevecchi, “L'Ascesa al trono di Nerone e le tribu alessandrine”, in M. Sordi, ed., *I canali della propaganda nel mondo antico* (Milan 1976) 200–19. 2) *P. Oxy.* LV 3781: a circular letter from the prefect to a number of strategoi informing them of the accession of Hadrian. 3) *SB* XII

edict concerned an accession. The most recent imperial accessions, those of Constantius and Galerius as Caesars, took place on 1 March 293, probably at Milan and Sirmium respectively.¹⁷ An upper figure of six weeks seems ample time for the announcement from either place to reach Alexandria, particularly in a matter of such importance; moreover, an ostrakon from Karanis in the Fayum (*O. Mich.* 441), dated 28 May 293, already includes Constantius and Galerius among the emperors.¹⁸ An edict dated 10 October 293 thus seems far too late to have anything to do with their accessions.

A second possibility is the celebration of a military victory. It was a long established Roman custom to mark important military victories by giving thanks to the gods. In republican Rome this took the particular form of a *supplicatio*, in which all the temples were opened and all the population of the city was expected to offer wine and incense to the gods.¹⁹ In the imperial period, significant victories could even become the occasion for annual commemorative sacrifices: the Parthian victories of Septimius Severus were still celebrated in the 220s CE by an annual sacrifice on 28 January (*Feriale Duranum* i. 14–16). A contemporary connection between sacrifice and imperial victories is attested by series of coins depicting on their reverse the four Tetrarchs performing a sacrifice over a tripod in front of a fort-like structure, with a variety of legends including VICTORIA SARMATICA and VIRTUS MILITUM.²⁰ Since this victory probably took place in the fall of 294 CE, it could not itself have been the occasion for the edict in question, but other possibilities exist.²¹ It is tempting to associate the edict with a victory in Egypt itself. One of Galerius' first acts as Caesar was the suppression of a revolt in Upper Egypt that centered on Coptos and the nearby town of Boreasis; the restoration of peace and order to a disturbed province would certainly have provided a suitable occasion for a governor to order sacrifices in thanks for 'these fortunate times'. Unfortunately,

10991: a fragmentary edict of the prefect proclaiming the accession of Avidius Cassius; see further P. J. Sijpesteijn, "Edict of C. Calvisius Statianus," *ZPE* 8 (1971) 186–92. 4) *BGU* II 646 = Wilcken *Chrestomathie* 490: an edict of the prefect on the accession of Pertinax, issued originally to the Alexandrians and then forwarded with a covering note to a number of strategoi. 5) *SB* I 421: an anonymous letter to an unnamed official on the proclamation of Maximus, son of Maximinus Thrax, as Caesar. 6) *P. Oxy.* LI 3607: a fragmentary covering letter of a deputy strategos, originally attached to an edict on the accession of Gordian I and II.

¹⁷ *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).2.2–3.1, *Cons. Const.* sub anno 292 = *Chron. Min.* 1.230, *Lact. Mort. Pers.* 35.4; cf. T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge, Mass. 1982) 4, 60, and 62.

¹⁸ To travel from Rome to Alexandria took about twenty-five days: D. Rathbone, "The Dates of Recognition in Egypt of the Emperors from Caracalla to Diocletianus," *ZPE* 62 (1986) 101–31 at 102; from Constantinople to Alexandria took a little more than a week: R. S. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S. R. Schwartz, and K. A. Worp, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta 1987) 32.

¹⁹ G. Wissowa, "Supplicatio", *RE* IV A (1931) 942–51.

²⁰ *RIC* 6, 175–8 nos. 100–33 (mint of Treveri), 281–2 nos. 12a–19b (Ticinum), 351–5 nos. 10a–44b (Rome), 459–61 nos. 31a–62 (Siscia), 529–30 nos. 1–11 (Heraclea), 555 nos. 18–20 (Nicomedia), 578–9 nos. 4–6 (Cyzicus), 616 nos. 31–33b (Antioch), and 661 nos. 7a–8 (Alexandria).

²¹ See *Cons. Const.* sub anno 294 = *Chron. Min.* 1.230 ("Constantino et Maximiano: his cons. castra facta in Sarmatia contra Acinco et Bononia") with T. D. Barnes, "Imperial Campaigns, A.D. 285–311," *Phoenix* 30 (1976) 174–93 at 187 and *New Empire* 53 n. 32.

chronological considerations again make this very unlikely, since Galerius apparently did not even enter Egypt until December 293 CE.²² If this is indeed the case, it is likely that when the official in Panopolis received this directive from the prefect the revolt was still in progress, and in regions not too distant. If we eliminate this victory of Galerius, we should perhaps look to one of his colleague Constantius. Shortly after his accession, Constantius had recovered the Gallic port of Gesoriacum/Bononia from Carausius, and thereby regained control of Gaul for the Tetrarchs (*Pan. Lat.* 8(5). 6. 1–4 and 6(7). 5. 2). Sometime after that, probably in the summer of 293 CE, he had led a successful campaign against the Germanic tribes along the Scheldt and lower Rhine.²³ These successes provided the occasion for all four emperors to assume the title “Germanicus maximus,” and it would have been entirely appropriate to celebrate them with public offerings. The dating would also fit: if we assume that Constantius wound up his campaigns in the late summer, it may well have taken until early October for the news to reach Alexandria.

The third possible occasion for this edict is the celebration of Diocletian's *vota decennialia*. Annual vows for the emperor's well being were paid and renewed on 3 January of every year, and normally involved animal sacrifice. These rituals took place throughout the empire, and it was apparently normal for the Roman governor to take a leading role in their performance.²⁴ By the second century CE it had become customary to distinguish tenth and twentieth anniversaries with special *vota decennialia* and *vicennialia*; somewhat later it became customary to announce *vota decennialia* at the very start of a reign, i.e. prayers that the gods would protect the emperor for the coming decade. These special *vota* were commemorated by series of coins with the legend VOTA X vel sim. Those issued under emperors from Antoninus Pius to Elagabalus also had a standard reverse type that depicted the

²² For the victory, see *Pan. Lat.* 8(5).5.2 (“Niliaca trophaea”) and Jerome, *Chronicle* 226a (“Busiris et Coptus contra Romanos rebellantes ad solum usque subversae sunt”); A. K. Bowman, “Two Notes, I: The Revolt of Busiris and Coptos,” *BASP* 21 (1984) 33–36, has convincingly argued that “Busiris” here is an error for “Boresis”. Barnes, “Campaigns” 180–2 and *New Empire* 63, established that the emperor must be Galerius, and that the date probably falls in late 293 or 294 CE. Since then a Latin papyrus has been published that confirms the presence of Galerius in Egypt at this time, but indicates that he entered Egypt only in mid-December of 293 CE at the earliest: see J. R. Rea, R. P. Salomons, and K. A. Worp, “A ration-warrant for an adiutor memoriae,” *JCS* 28 (1985) 101–13.

²³ Described in *Pan. Lat.* 8(5). 7. 4–9. 4; cf. 6(7). 5. 3. The date is not certain: it clearly took place after the capture of Gesoriacum, but before Constantius' invasion of Britain, generally dated to 296 CE. Although a date of 294 or even 295 is possible, most scholars prefer 293 CE, presumably because it seems closely tied to the re-establishment of control in northern Gaul that began with the siege of Gesoriacum; see Barnes, “Imperial Campaigns” 179.

²⁴ These vows are described in detail in the *acta* of the Arval Brothers in Rome: J. Scheid, *Romulus et ses frères. Le collège des Frères Arvales, modèle du culte public dans la Rome des empereurs* (1990) 290–383. Fragmentary inscriptions from Cyrenaica indicate that virtually identical vows were made there: J. M. Reynolds, “Vota pro salute Principis,” *PBSR* ns 17 (1962) 33–36, and “Notes on Cyrenaican Inscriptions,” *PBSR* ns 20 (1965) 52–54, and literary references (e.g. Plut. *Cic.* 2.1; Lucian *Pseudol.* 8) suggest that they were familiar throughout the Greek world. For the role of the governor, see Pliny, *Epp.* 10. 35, 36, 100, and 101, who reports to Trajan that he, along with his fellow-soldiers and the provincials, has undertaken and paid the vows for the emperor's well being.

emperor performing a sacrifice over a tripod, thus reinforcing the link between these *vota* and sacrifice. For much of the third century this reverse type was dropped in favor of a simpler one with the inscription VOTIS DECENNALIBUS inside a wreath, but the scene of sacrifice was revived by Numerian in 283 CE.²⁵

It is fairly certain that Diocletian celebrated his *vota vicennalia* on 20 November 303 CE.²⁶ This occasion was marked by numerous issues of coins, one of which depicted on the reverse two emperors sacrificing over an altar with a female figure behind them; in view of the legend FELICITAS TEMPORUM this can only be Felicitas herself.²⁷ Likewise, a monument erected in Rome on this occasion depicts an emperor pouring a libation over an altar, while attendants wait with a bull, pig, and sheep to perform the ancient sacrifice of the *suovetaurilia*. Since in traditional religion this sacrifice was always associated with the purificatory rite of the *lustratio*, this monument almost certainly does not depict a votive sacrifice; it nevertheless highlights the public association between sacrifice and the *vicennalia*.²⁸ There is thus clear evidence of a public association of Diocletian's *vota vicennalia* with sacrifice. Although there is no specific evidence regarding his *vota decennalia*, we may reasonably assume that these fell on 20 November 293 CE. Series of coins note the event, although they lack the sacrificial scene of the later issue.²⁹ Still, it is more than likely that there were orders to mark the occasion with special sacrifices. The prefect's sentiment that "it is natural to rejoice [in these most blessed of times]" would be entirely appropriate for the observance of the tenth anniversary of an emperor who had restored order to the Roman world, and may perhaps anticipate the notion of Felicitas Temporum that figures on the *vicennalia* issue of a decade later. An edict of 10 October might seem too early to concern an anniversary that fell on 20 November, but it is possible that the prefect, knowing the time that it would take to disseminate his orders, decided to initiate the process well in advance of the actual event.

Either Constantius' victories in Gaul or Diocletian's *vota decennalia*, then, seems the most likely immediate occasion for this edict, although it is of course entirely possible that it concerned another event of which there is now no record. Lastly, we should consider whether this edict might have any connection with the well-documented concern of Diocletian and his colleagues to propagate the practice of sacrifice. We know of several specific measures along these lines. The first was an order that everyone who served in the imperial household or in the military should either

²⁵ G. Wissowa, "Decennalia," *RE* 4 (1898) 2265–67; H. Mattingly, "The Imperial Vota," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 36 (1950) 155–95, gathers and discusses the numismatic evidence.

²⁶ *Lact. Mort. Pers.* 17.1; cf. Barnes *New Empire* 56.

²⁷ *RIC* 6, 166 no. 27; cf. p. 144. For other *vicennalia* issues, see Mattingly "Vota" 177–78, nos. 57 a–k.

²⁸ H. P. L'Orange, "Ein tetrarchisches Ehrendenkmal auf dem Forum Romanum," *RömMitt* 53 (1938) 1–34, reprinted in his *Likeness and Icon* (Odense 1973) 131–57; he argues (143–4) that the monument depicts the ceremonial close of the traditional census. See further H. Kähler, *Das Fünfsäulendenkmal für die Tetrarchen auf dem Forum Romanum* (Cologne 1964).

²⁹ Mattingly, "Vota" 175–6, nos. 56 a–k. Note, however, that a coin from that year announcing Galerius' prospective *decennalia* depicts the emperor performing a sacrifice: Mattingly, "Vota" 176, no. 56A a.

offer sacrifice or lose his position; its date is disputed, but falls sometime between 299 and 302 CE.³⁰ The other two were part of the "Great Persecution" against the Christians. One, the "third edict" issued in the fall of 303 CE, extended a pardon to all imprisoned Christian clergy on condition that they perform a sacrifice.³¹ The other, the "fourth edict" issued probably in early 304 CE, ordered all the inhabitants of the empire to sacrifice and offer a libation, although it seems to have been enforced only the eastern part of the empire.³² After Diocletian's retirement and Galerius' promotion, the new Caesar Maximinus apparently re-issued or re-enforced the last of these decrees, with the result that heralds went through towns summoning people to the temples while military tribunes, using the census lists, called up individuals by name.³³ The importance of sacrifice in the persecution is highlighted by the fact that Galerius later claimed that the intention behind it was to recall the Christians to "the practices of the ancients," among which sacrifice itself clearly held a prominent place.³⁴

Given that at least six years intervened between the edict at hand and the earliest of these measures, it is unlikely that there is any immediate connection between the two. At most, it might suggest a particular keenness on the part of Galerius to encourage sacrifice in the territory under his rule.³⁵ Nevertheless, this fragmentary edict is a reminder of the significant role that sacrifice continued to play in public life even in the last years of the third century CE. Sacrifice was not simply a stick with which to beat the Christians, but was instead a key element in a system of exchange that bound together the emperor, the people of the empire, and the gods: the people invoked the aid of the gods for the emperor, the emperor with divine aid preserved the empire, and the people thanked the gods for their protection of the emperor and through him of themselves.³⁶ The last element of the system was no

³⁰ Lact. *Mort. Pers.* 10, and *Div. Inst.* 4.27.4–5; cf. Eus. *HE* 8.1.7 and 4.1–2. J. Moreau, *Lactance: De la mort des persécuteurs* (Sources chrétiennes 39: Paris 1954) 266, argues for a date in 299–300 CE; T. D. Barnes, "Sossianus Hierocles and the Antecedents of the 'Great Persecution,'" *HSCP* 80 (1976) 239–52 at 245, argues instead for 302 CE.

³¹ Eus. *HE* 8.6.10; cf. *HE* 8.2.5–8.3.3 and *MP* 1.3–4. See further G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, "Aspects of the 'Great Persecution,'" *HTR* 47 (1954) 75–114 at 76–7. A radical re-interpretation of the evidence has recently been advanced by K.-H. Schwarte, "Diokletians Christengesetz," in R. Günther and S. Rebenich, eds., *E fontibus haurire: Beiträge zur römischen Geschichte und zu ihren Hilfswissenschaften* (Paderborn 1994) 203–40, who argues that only one edict lay behind the Diocletianic persecution, containing an order to sacrifice that was directed partly at the clergy and partly at non-clerics.

³² Eus. *MP* 3.1, with de Ste. Croix, "Aspects" 84–100 and A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (repr. Baltimore 1986) 1079 n. 68.

³³ Eus. *MP* 4.8 with de Ste. Croix "Aspects" 97–8; on the census, see further Lact. *Mort. Pers.* 23 with Barnes *New Empire* 227–8. A similar edict, issued in 309, required local magistrates to enforce universal sacrifice: Eus. *MP* 9.2.

³⁴ Lact. *Mort. Pers.* 34.2 and 3, "veterum instituta"; cf. Eus. *HE* 8.17.7–8.

³⁵ In contrast, we may note Eusebius' assertion that some governors were freed from the obligation to sacrifice (*HE* 8.1.2). If this does suggest a zeal for sacrifice on the part of Galerius, that would lend support to the view that he was a chief instigator of the persecution: see e.g. T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981) 19–21.

³⁶ On the role of sacrifice in the imperial system, see e.g. S. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge 1984) 207–33 and R. Gordon, "The Veil of

doubt a regular occurrence, so regular that on many occasions it must have received no notice in the historical record. Yet this edict, especially when considered together with other edicts concerning religious festivals, suggests how routine it may have been for the proclamation of public sacrifices to have passed down the levels of government. Threats to the practice of sacrifice were threats to this entire system, and emperors like Diocletian who perceived such a threat might devise ways to encourage or even enforce the practice.³⁷ While this fragmentary edict probably has no direct connection with Diocletian's program of enforcing sacrifice, it is nevertheless a useful example of the workings of the system that he wanted to protect.

Zusammenfassung

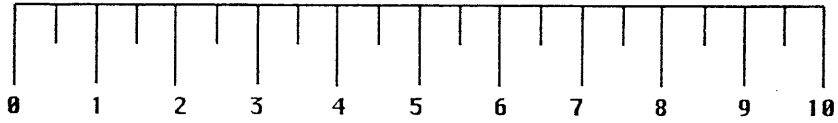
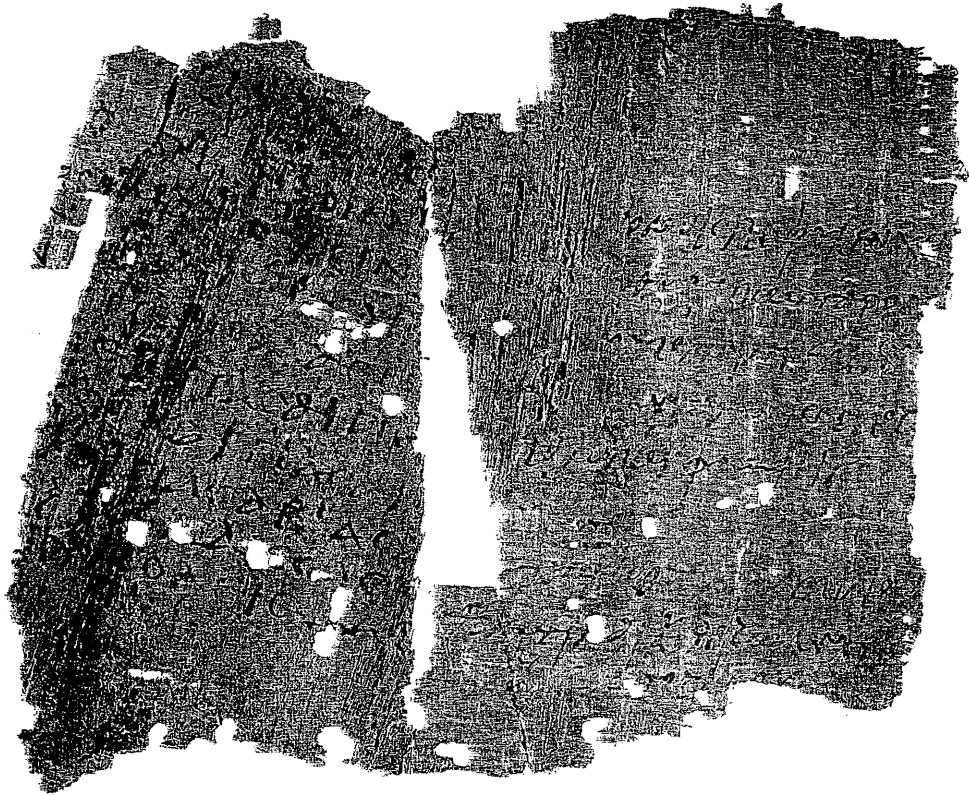
Der vorstehende Aufsatz ediert zwei kleine Fragmente aus dem Posteingangsbuch wahrscheinlich des Strategen des Panopolitischen Gaues vom Jahre 293/4 (zu *P. Ryl.* I 1 gehörig, aber bisher unpubliziert). Der dritte Brief (Z. A 2–5), den wohl der Präfekt Rutilius Felix über den unmittelbar angeredeten *Katholikos* oder *Praeses* an die Gaustrategen gerichtet hat, ordnet Opfer an, die anscheinend aus Anlaß der Siege des Caesaren Constantius in Gallien oder der *vota decennialia* Diokletians der Freude des Landes über die glücklichen Zeiten (A 2) unter der Tetrarchie Ausdruck verleihen sollen. Die Anordnung der Opfer illustriert die hohe Bedeutung, die Diokletian auch bei anderen Anlässen der Darbringung von Opfern beimaß. Sie verband die Dankbarkeit des gesamten Volkes mit dem Schutz der Götter und mit den Kaisern, die mit göttlicher Hilfe das Reich beschützten und erhielten. Das Opfer an die Götter stand im Schnittpunkt von Religion und Staatsideologie und wurde zu einem einigen Band einer Bevölkerung, die aus vielen Völkern und Sprachen zusammengesetzt war.

Power: Emperors, Sacrificers, and Benefactors," in M. Beard and J. North, eds., *Pagan Priests* (Ithaca, NY 1990) 201–31.

³⁷ So also Decius: J. B. Rives, "The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire," *JRS* 89 (1999) 135–54; cf. M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge 1998), 1.239–41. On the role of sacrifice in the religious policy urged by Porphyry, see E. D. Digeser, "Lactantius, Porphyry and the Debate over Religious Toleration," *JRS* 88 (1998) 129–46.

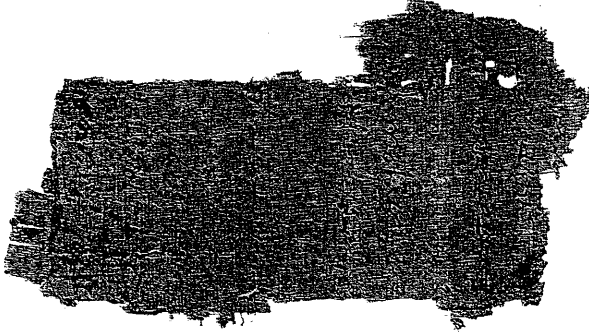
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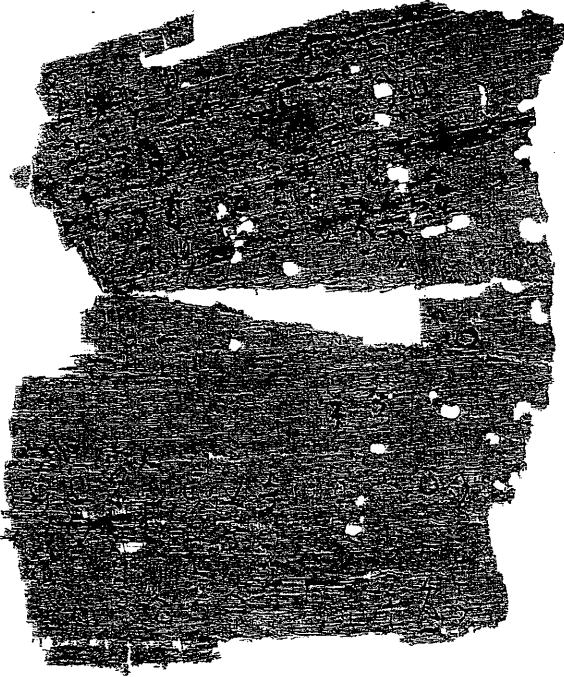


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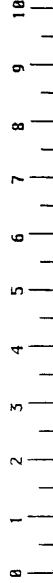
1. p. 2 of *P. Ryl. I 1* (fr. B), on the left: *Deut.* III.8-10; on the right: letterbook fr. A
(see R. Bagnall-J. Rives, pp. 77-86).



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