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EUTROPIUS V.C. MAGISTER MEMORIAE?

In the introduction to his translation of and commentary on Eutropius' *Breviarium*, an epitome of Roman history to 364 written in 369/70 at the behest of the emperor Valens, H. W. Bird states, "[That Eutropius] served in the senior post of Secretary of State for General Petitions (*magister memoriae*) under Valens . . . and Eutropius' statement (*Brev.* 10.16) that he accompanied Julian on his Persian campaign in 363 are the only pieces of totally incontestable evidence for Eutropius' life and career."¹

1. *The "Breviarium ab urbe condita" of Eutropius*, Translated Texts for Historians, vol. 14 (Liverpool, 1993), p. vii and n. 3. First published as "Eutropius: His Life and Career," *EMC/CV* 32 (1988): p. 51 and n. 5.

That Eutropius was *magister memoriae* is the *communis opinio* and is accepted even by the skeptic Willem den Boer,² but was it so?

The first problem is that both Festus, the author of another short epitome produced at the request of Valens, and Eutropius seem to have been writing at the same time, probably over the winter of 369–70, between Valens' taking of the title "Gothicus Maximus" in late 369 and his advance to Antioch in April 370 in preparation for a campaign against the Persians,³ yet both authors were supposedly *magistri memoriae*, and there could only be one such *magister* at any one time. This obvious temporal coincidence of the two *magistri* has been avoided by modern scholars with the statement that Valens asked his *magister memoriae* Eutropius for an epitome history, promoted him (to proconsul of Asia) upon its completion, and then requested that his successor, Festus, do it again, because Eutropius' history was too long.⁴ But this interpretation is ridiculous, based as it is upon the stereotype of a dim-witted Pannonian soldier-emperor, and is a feeble attempt to avoid a serious problem. It should be obvious to everyone that the two *breviaria* are completely different: Festus' work is a geographical overview combined with an epitome of the history of the eastern frontier (especially with respect to the Parthians and Persians, which makes sense in the lead-up to Valens' planned Persian campaign) and can in no way be seen as a replacement for or an abbreviation of Eutropius. The verbal similarities between Eutropius and Festus are explained not by Festus' use of his predecessor's work but by the use by both of the *Kaisergeschichte*, an earlier, now-lost epitome similar to Eutropius', but ending in 357, also used by other fourth-century epitomators.⁵ On the face of it, it seems more likely that both were asked to compose their works at the same time, probably as the victorious Valens retired to winter in Marcianopolis in late 369, but that each was given a different commission. The works would have been presented to him in March or April of 370. But if both works were written at the same time with different purposes, both authors could not have been *magistri memoriae*.

That Festus was indeed *magister memoriae* appears to be relatively certain. He is given this title in Bambergensis E.III.22, a tenth-century manuscript of Festus'

2. *Some Minor Roman Historians* (Leiden, 1972), 114. Den Boer is justly skeptical when it comes to the identification of Eutropius; I believe that scholars have conflated a number of different homonymous individuals to reconstruct Eutropius' career (in fact, virtually every Eutropius known from the second half of the fourth century, except Eutropius 3 and 4 in *PLRE* 1:318). See *Historians*, 114–15, and Bird, *Breviarium* (n. 1 above), vii–xviii.

3. For Valens' dates, see T. D. Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus and the Representation of Historical Reality* (Ithaca, 1998), 251–52. Valens had claimed the title "Gothicus Maximus" by 10–31 December 369; see *CIL* 6.1175 and G. Bonamente, "La dedica del 'Breviarium' e la carriera di Eutropio," *GIF* 29 (1977): p. 276 and nn. 7–8. For the dates of Eutropius' and Festus' epitomes, see, e.g., *PLRE* 1:317, s.v. Eutropius 2 (369, on eve of Persian war) and 335, s.v. Festus (369, after victory over Goths); *HLL* §§538 A and 539.1 *Bibl.* 3 (369 as *terminus post quem* for both; with *bibl.*); J. W. Eadie, *The "Breviarium" of Festus* (London, 1967), 1–3 (369/70); M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet, *Festus. Brége des hauts faits du peuple romain* (Paris, 1994), xvi (between peace with Goths and on the point of commencing hostilities in the East; see also p. v, n. 2, "cette datation, admise par tous . . ."); Bird, *Breviarium*, xiii and xviii–xix (in Dec. 369); and Bonamente, "Dedica" (above), 276–77, 296 (end of 369 and beginning of 370).

4. A. Momigliano, "Pagan and Christian Historiography in the Fourth Century A.D.," in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century*, ed. A. Momigliano (Oxford, 1963), 86: "... the seventy-seven pages of [Eutropius'] Teubner text must have proved too many for Valens. Festus, who followed, restricted himself to about twenty pages." An oft-repeated verdict: see Bird, *Breviarium*, xix and xxiv.

5. R. W. Burgess, "Jerome and the *Kaisergeschichte*," *Historia* 44 (1995): 349–69.

Breviarium,⁶ in both the incipit and explicit of the text (“Incipit Breviarium Festi vc magistri memoriae”⁷ and “Explicit Breviarium ab urbe condita Festi vc magistri memoriae”),⁸ and Ammianus Marcellinus also says that he held the *magisterium memoriae* (29.2.22).⁹ But what is the evidence that Eutropius held the same office?

In his Teubner edition of 1979 C. Santini lists eight manuscripts of Eutropius’ *Breviarium* that contain Eutropius’ dedication to Valens, printed in his text as: “Domino Valenti Gothico Maximo Perpetuo Augusto Eutropius v.c. magister memoriae.”¹⁰ These manuscripts—GCIMVLOA¹¹—all descend from a common hyparchetype, γ , which Santini calls the *codex Gallicus*. However, none of these manuscripts includes the words *magister memoriae*, either in an incipit or an explicit, in the dedication or the preface. Manuscripts QPa describe him as “vc” or “vir clarissimus” in the incipit, VLO add “Eutropius vc peculiariter suus” (whatever that means) after the preface, MS A reports “Eutropius ***uliariter suus” after “Augusto,” and MS I adds “Eutropius” in the same place, so Santini’s “Eutropius v.c.” would appear to be accurate, though it may not originally have appeared exactly where he presents it. The evidence of Eutropius’ work itself, therefore, supports the appearance of only “Eutropius v.c.” in the incipit or dedication, not *magister memoriae*.

None of the authors who used Eutropius and whose work survives calls him a *magister memoriae*. The Greek translation of Paeianus simply calls him Eutropius, as does Paul the Deacon in his letter to Adelperga and its incipit. Landolfus Sagax calls him a pagan (“Eutropius gentilis”).¹² Malalas (Thurn, 158.60, 257.64–65 = Bonn, 209, 334) just calls him a Roman writer and chronicler.

Three short descriptions of Eutropius have survived from antiquity: an entry in the encyclopedia called the *Suda* (tenth or eleventh century) and short notes by Ps.-Codinus (the fictitious name given to a work of the tenth century¹³) and Nicephorus Gregoras (c. 1290–c. 1360). The *Suda* says that he was an Italian *sophistes* who wrote an epitome of Roman history and other things “in the language of the Italians.” This is obviously based on no more evidence than the history itself. By

6. See Eadie, *Breviarium* (above, n. 3), 23 and 25. For the date, see also *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, ed. R. D. Reynolds (Oxford, 1983), 165.

7. Eadie, *Breviarium*, 6 (he does not give the explicit).

8. A later hand in the margin of MS A (Brussels 4659; thirteenth century) claims he was a “dictator magistri memoriae clementissimi principis Valentis,” but the source for and date of this are unknown. See Arnaud-Lindet, *Festus* (above, n. 3), ix and 2 *app. crit.*

9. The reading “Festinus” in MS V (the only manuscript to predate the fourteenth century), is an emendation of the original “Festus” by a second hand (see Seyfarth’s apparatus). For the identification, see *PLRE* 1:334 and Eadie, *Breviarium*, 6–7.

10. H. Droysen (ed., Eutropi “Breviarium ab Urbe Condita,” in *MGH, AA*, vol. 2 [1878; reprint, Berlin, 1961], 3) cites only GLO and omits “Gothico.” F. L. Müller’s text of the dedication (Eutropii “Breviarium ab urbe condita,” *Eutropius, “Kurze Geschichte Roms seit Gründung”* (753 v. Chr. – 364 n. Chr.), *Palingenesia* 56 [Stuttgart, 1995], 22) is the same as Santini’s.

11. It is missing from Q and H, though Q is related to VLOA (group χ) and H is related to CMI (group κ), so the losses are a result of scribal omission. The sigla used represent the following manuscripts: G: Gothanus I 101 (ninth century); C: Parisinus Latinus 7240 (*olim* Colbertinus 3001) (late eleventh); I: Lincolnensis 100 (early twelfth); M: Parisinus Latinus 18 104 (late twelfth); V: Vaticanus Latinus 1981 (late tenth); L: Leidensis Bibliothecae publicae Latinus 141 (early tenth); O: Bertinianus Audomarensis (St Omer) 697 (eleventh); A: Cantabrigensis CCC 129 (late thirteenth); Q: Vindobonensis 323 (twelfth); H: Harleianus 2729 (twelfth); and Pa: Parisinus Latinus 5802 (thirteenth). For the manuscripts, see also Reynolds, *Texts* (n. 6 above), 159–62, and Müller, *Eutropii Breviarium* (n. 10 above), 13–20.

12. These can be found most easily in Droysen’s edition of Eutropius (pp. 4–5, 8, and 227).

13. *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford, 1991), 1135 and 1598, s.vv. “Kodinus, Pseudo-” and “Patria of Constantinople.”

sophistes the *Suda* merely means that he was a skilled prose writer and “the language of the Italians” is his way of saying Latin. Nicephorus calls him “wise” (*sophos*, perhaps a corruption or misreading of *sophistes*), a contemporary of Valens and Julian, and a pagan. All of this could have been derived from the history as well. Ps.-Codinus also calls him a *sophistes* adding that he accompanied Julian on his Persian campaign and was an *epistolographos* of Constantine. The former derives from the text of the history itself, as noted above, while the latter is most peculiar. Since Eutropius was a contemporary of Julian and Valens (360s), he could hardly have been Constantine’s secretary, or *magister epistularum*, which was not an office for novices.¹⁴ The usual remedy is to emend Κωνσταντίνου to Κωνσταντίου, that is, Constantius II, Julian’s predecessor. I, however, am skeptical. None of the other writers on Eutropius knows anything more about him than what could be gleaned from the text; where did Ps.-Codinus discover this information that no one else knows? There is no hint in the work itself that Eutropius held any office under Constantine or Constantius. I can only suggest that Codinus either has mistaken two Eutropii, one under Constantine and the other the historian, or has simply invented the title.¹⁵ However one explains this reference, none of these sources describes Eutropius as a *magister memoriae*, and one imagines that if he had been so identified in the dedication (or anywhere else), these writers would have noted it.

So where does the *magister memoriae* of Santini’s text come from? It appears only in Bambergensis E.III.22, the same manuscript noted above that reports Festus’ office in the incipit and explicit.¹⁶ This manuscript contains only the *Epitome* of Florus and the *Breviarium* of Festus, but at the bottom of folio 52^r, at the end of Festus, in what was originally a blank space at the bottom of the last page of the codex, there appears after two blank lines the preface to Eutropius without an incipit and with the following dedication: “Valenti maximo perpetuo aug eutropius vc magister memoriae.” Included at the end, as part of the preface, is “Lege, Censorine, cum liberis tuis, propitio domino Christo semper.”¹⁷ This is followed at the beginning of the next line by “Ordo imperii Romani a rege Romulo usque Valentiniano et Valente Augusti. libri X. hoc est breviarium. fecisti. incipit,” which is written rather sloppily, without regard for either grammar or the lining of the page. Neither of these lines appears in any other manuscript of Eutropius’ *Breviarium*, and both are oddly placed after the preface. Eutropius’ *Breviarium* itself, however, does not appear. The dedication and preface were written by a scribe different from, and less careful than, the one who had copied the earlier text of Festus, and they were probably copied from a

14. See Bird, “Eutropius,” 52–53. Müller (*Eutropii Breviarium*, 3) incorrectly equates ἐπιστολογράφος and *magister memoriae*. The Greek for *magister memoriae* is ἀντιγραφεὺς τῆς μνήμης.

15. The term ἐπιστολογράφος is rare and late in a Roman context, and may well be a Byzantine concoction (see *PLRE* 3:1046), though a similar description of a *magister epistularum* does appear in the fourth century (see *PLRE* 1:175, s.v. Calliopius 3 [ἐπιστολὰς γράφων]).

16. Santini, xv, and Droysen, i. This is also the lone manuscript that calls Florus “Julius Florus” when all the other manuscripts call him “L. Annaeus Florus.” R. Peiper was the first to notice the reference to Eutropius in this manuscript (“Zu Eutropius,” *Philologus* 33 [1874], 686).

17. The name is peculiar in this context. There are known perhaps ten or eleven men of this name between 39 B.C.E. and the mid-third century C.E. (*PIR*² A 469; C 654–55, 657, 830; L 205, 314; M 222–23, 298 [=C 652]; *RE Suppl.* 14 [1974], 14, s.v. “Aiacius” 1; *RE Suppl.* 15 [1978], 2, s.v. “Aelius” 36a; *AE* 1913: 124), yet in *PLRE* 1–3 (260–641 C.E.) there are known only two fourth-century members of a single family (only one alive after 370) and a fictitious usurper of the *Historia Augusta* (*PLRE* 1:196–97, s.v. “Censorinus” [Censorinus 3 = *PIR*² C 656]). One suspects a sly reference to Censorinus (*PIR*² C 655), the author of *De die natali*, a work that, among other things, concerns itself with the chronology of Roman history.

different manuscript at a different time. Why would just the dedication and preface appear without the text? There are a number of possibilities, but there is no way to be certain. The lack of a proper incipit and the oddly placed extra lines (of which the second is like an incipit) suggest that there was never any intention of copying out the entire text.

This version of the dedication omits “Domino” and “Gothico” from Valens’ titles.¹⁸ This proves that it is not a more accurate version of the dedication that had been preserved to the tenth century in an early manuscript tradition that is now lost. Most damning of all is the fact that “magister memoriae” does not appear to be original, but seems to have been written in the space that appeared at the end of the line after “vc.” This space was not big enough and the two words are closely written as one, with “memoriae” (actually written “memoriet”) trailing out considerably into the margin instead of being taken over onto the beginning of the next line as one would expect.¹⁹ This is in marked contrast to the words and letters in the earlier part of the line, which are well spaced out.

Even more suspicious is the fact that Bamb. E.III.22 is the manuscript that identifies Festus as *magister memoriae*, as was noted above. The work is plainly identified in large rustic capitals as a “BREVIARIVM AB VRBE CONDITA,” and the author is described as “FESTI VC MAGISTRI MEMORIAE” in the explicit, just centimeters above the blank space in the manuscript that was later filled with Eutropius’ dedication and preface. “Festus vc” had dedicated to the emperor, at his request, an epitome history of Rome from its foundation. “Eutropius vc” had done the same thing, so why should he not hold the same office, the “Master of the Memory”? What better title for the emperor’s personal historian?²⁰

It must be noted that incipits, explicits, dedications, colophons, headings, and subscriptions, in fact any short texts that stand separate from the beginning or end of an ancient author’s work, are the most fragile parts of the text, often failing to be treated with the same consideration as the works themselves. For instance, most manuscripts of Vegetius’ *Epitoma rei militaris* call him *vir inlustris comes*, but one, Π, gives him the meaningless title *comes sacrum*, which has been incorrectly interpreted as a corruption of *comes stabuli*, because Vegetius has been identified as the author of a veterinary work on horses and cattle. And some incipits call him Publius while others call him Flavius.²¹ There is a similar onomastic example noted above in note 16 with respect to the name of the epitomator Florus. The headings and subscriptions to the laws of the *Theodosian Code* are notoriously corrupt.²² Marius Victorinus’ *De definitionibus* was lost until 1877 because his name had been replaced in the manuscripts by that of Boethius, who had used and commented (unfavorably) upon the work.²³ All the incipits and explicits to the surviving books of Ammianus Marcellinus’ history are completely consistent in their numbering from fourteen to thirty-one, yet an analysis of the structure of the work as a whole shows that each

18. The dedication begins with a large “V” (for “Valenti”) that fills two lines out into the left margin.

19. The letters “-oriet” extend beyond the edge of the line. There is a photograph in G. Bonamente, *Giuliano L’Apostata e il “Breviario” di Eutropio* (Rome, 1986), pl. I.

20. Bonamente also notes this possibility and defends the appearance of “magister memoriae” in his “Dedica,” 281, 284–91.

21. N. P. Milner, *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, TTH 16 (Liverpool, 1993), xxi–xxiv.

22. See R. S. Bagnall et al., *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta, 1987), 71–84.

23. H. Usener, *Anecdoton Holderi* (Bonn, 1877), 59–66.

figure must be five too low.²⁴ The anonymous *Gallic Chronicle of 452* is perhaps the most interesting example. An explicit from the chronicle of Prosper was mistakenly added when the last entries from Prosper (covering the years 453–55) were copied onto the end of the *Gallic Chronicle*. A later scribe read this explicit and at the beginning of the chronicle added an explicit for the preceding chronicle (Jerome's translation and continuation of Eusebius' *Chronici canones*) and an incipit naming Prosper again. An even later scribe replaced this explicit with the longer one from Prosper's work itself (Prosper and the *Gallic Chronicle* both follow Jerome and thus begin in the same year) and even added the first entry from Prosper for good measure, knowing all the while that the chronicle he was busy disguising as Prosper's was not Prosper's.²⁵

How much more susceptible to tampering would Eutropius' dedication be, severed entirely from the work itself? In such circumstances it can hardly be considered more than a glorified doodle, something added to fill up the space at the bottom of the page, and therefore lacking all authority.

In spite of this, it is, of course, not impossible that the tenth-century scribe copied Eutropius' dedication from a rare early manuscript that later disappeared without progeny, collateral descendants, or other influence on the tradition. But the coincidence of this evidence's appearing in the sole manuscript that identifies Festus as a *magister memoriae* is in itself extremely suspicious, as too is the nature of the words themselves, which appear to have been added after the preface (or at least its first line) had been completed. These suspicious facts, coupled with the contemporaneous appearance of the works of Festus and Eutropius when both were supposedly holding the same office, make Eutropius' tenure of the *magisterium memoriae* very unlikely indeed. That Eutropius was *magister memoriae* must therefore be downgraded from "incontestable" to "most unlikely possibility." Consequently, Eutropius' further career was probably not as it is usually reconstructed (see n. 2). That Eutropius was a high-ranking member of the court is certain, given that the request came directly from the emperor and Eutropius was already a *vir clarissimus*, but what his exact position was and what his career was after he fulfilled his commission must remain uncertain.

R. W. BURGESS
Ottawa

24. See Barnes, *Ammianus Marcellinus* (n. 3 above), 20–31.

25. This is discussed in detail in my forthcoming edition of the *Gallic Chronicle of 452* in *Revisiting Late Roman Gaul*, ed. R. Mathisen and D. Schanzer (Aldershot, England, 2001), 52–53.