

IN A CAREFULLY ARGUED ARTICLE¹ G. S. R. Thomas has sought to demonstrate that the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian in 305 was not the result of a plan drawn up a long time in advance, as the Panegyrist of 307 avers,² and that Maximian did not give Diocletian his oath that he would resign in the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, as the Panegyrist of 310 claims,³ but rather that Diocletian yielded to pressure put upon him by Galerius in the months immediately preceding the abdication. Thomas values highly the evidence of Lactantius, with good reason, and emphasizes (239–240) the tendentiousness and inconsistency of the Panegyrics in question.

To accept the version of the Panegyrics, for they can be held to complement each other, one would have to find a suitable occasion on which Diocletian and Maximian could have met and discussed the matter. The one chosen by a large number of scholars⁴ is the celebration of Diocletian's *vicennalia* in Rome in November 303,⁵ an obvious choice.

In his assault on the orthodox version Thomas argues that Maximian was not even in Rome in November 303. No source specifically states so; indeed "on sait qu'il y était en 298; la seconde fois qu'il visita cette ville, ce fut en 304, alors qu'il était consul pour la huitième fois."⁶ The passage upon which this claim is based is *Pan.* 6/7.8.7–8:

Te primo ingressu tuo tanta laetitia, tanta frequentia populus Romanus excepit, ut, cum te ad Capitolini Iovis gremium vel oculis ferre gestiret, stipatione sui vix ad portas urbis admitteret. Te rursus vicesimo anno imperatorem, octavo consulem, ita ipsa amplexu quodam suo Roma voluit detinere ut videretur augurari iam et timere quod factum est.

Thomas, who has since been followed by Rousselle,⁷ is by no means the

¹"L'Abdication de Dioclétien," *Byzantion* 43 (1973) 229–247.

²*Pan.* 6/7.9.2: *consilii olim . . . inter vos placiti*. (In references to the Panegyrics, I give first the number in the edition of E. Galletier, *Panegyriques Latins* (Paris 1952), and then that of R. A. B. Mynors, *XII Panegyrici Latini* (Oxford 1964). Mynors's text is used unless otherwise specified.)

³*Pan.* 7/6.15.6.

⁴Listed and cited *in extenso* by Thomas (above, note 1) 237, n. 1.

⁵See *PPanop.* 2.162, 170, 187–188, 200 (T. C. Skeat [ed.], *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin* [Dublin 1964]) for confirmation of Lactantius *Mort. Pers.* 17.1 that Diocletian's *dies imperii* was November 20th and not September 17th (*Chron. Pasch.*, ed. T. Mommsen, *Chron. Min.* I [MGH AA 9.229]) or November 17th (derived from Eusebius *Mart. Pal.* 1.5–2.4).

⁶Thomas (above, note 1) 236.

⁷A. Rousselle, "La chronologie de Maximien Hercule et le mythe de la Tétrarchie," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 2 (1976) (= *Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon* 188) 456 and 463, n. 24.

first to interpret the passage thus. Ensslin, Galletier, and D'Elia also put the same construction upon it.⁸ But all these writers misinterpret the Panegyrist. He does not claim that it was during his eighth consulship (i.e., A.D. 304) that Maximian arrived in Rome for the second time. The parallelism of *te primo ingressu tuo . . . te rursus vicesimo anno imperatorem, octavo consulem* may indeed at first suggest that the speaker is going to focus on two *arrivals* in Rome.⁹ In fact he does not. He focuses instead on two occasions upon which (he alleges) the Roman populace demonstrated its regard for Maximian so enthusiastically that it blocked his progress.

The first occasion was when he arrived in Rome, apparently for the first time, in 298 or 299.¹⁰ The second was when he attempted to *leave* "in the twentieth year of his reign, when he was consul for the eighth time." This is A.D. 304.¹¹ The Panegyrist is not concerned to date Maximian's visits to Rome, or arrivals there, but rather to stress the impact which he made on the City, manifested by public demonstrations, first, upon his very first arrival there, and secondly, upon his final departure from the city as reigning Emperor before his premature abdication, a demonstration such *ut [Roma] videretur augurari iam et timere quod factum est*.

Why the date, which is curiously explicit for the genre?¹² Now the first occasion was readily identifiable: *primo ingressu*—Rome's first sight of Maximian, symbolic, perhaps even memorable, but at any rate unambiguous. The second occasion needed more precise identification, for by the time this Panegyric was delivered Maximian had visited Rome once more, in circumstances which would require careful explanation and justification. It would not do to have his audience confuse the visits;

⁸W. Ensslin, "Maximianus," *RE* 14.2 (1930) 2509; E. Galletier (above, note 2) 2.199, note complémentaire to page 23; S. D'Elia, "Ricerche sui panegirici di Mamertino a Massimiano," *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia della Università di Napoli* 9 (1960–1961) 244.

⁹D'Elia (above, note 8) 248 is deceived by it: "Nessuna testimonianza . . . ci obbliga a pensare che Massimiano fosse presente a Roma durante il trionfo di Diocleziano nel 303; anzi il 'rursus' del panegirista de VII (VI) sembra escluderlo in maniera piuttosto precisa." By no means.

¹⁰The Panegyrist implies that it was after wars in Mauretania (8.6). This is confirmed by the dedication of the baths of Diocletian; *CIL* 6.1130 (*ILS* 646). Maximian was evidently in Carthage on March 10, 298; *Frag. Varic.* 41, *FIRA* 2.473; T. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 (Berlin 1905) 259, 265 f. We do not know how long he stayed. Various works of reconstruction in Africa are listed by Ensslin (above, note 8) 2506, who thought that this points to his staying till 299, but this would be true only if he personally supervised the works. Maximian was COS VI in 299 and may have returned to Rome in time to take up office there in person.

¹¹See below, note 19.

¹²Specific dates are usually restricted to the occasions of the Panegyrics themselves, for example, in the apostrophe *O Kalendae Martiae*, *Pan.* 4/8.3.1, but are not always provided even for these, as, most notoriously, is the case with *Pan.* 3/11.

hence *octavo consulem*. Important political considerations lie behind the Panegyrist's selection of events. He is preparing the way for a defence of Maximian's later conduct which has its climax, in chapter 11, in Rome's appeal to her erstwhile ruler to rescue her from chaos. Here he is artfully introducing two innocuous harbingers of this third, very recent and much more ambiguous "visit."

The speaker's primary task, of course, is the celebration of the marriage of Constantine and Fausta, and Constantine's promotion to the rank of Augustus.¹³ This was the public affirmation of a political alliance between Maximian and Constantine forged in the second half of 307,¹⁴ a celebration attended, naturally, by both the principals. A delicate but vital ancillary task was therefore imposed upon the Panegyrist. He had to explain how Maximian came to be there, exercising authority as Augustus; in short, to justify his recent emergence from retirement, or to put it more bluntly, his usurpation. For on such justification rested Constantine's title Augustus, too. He takes a bold line, as he himself confesses (7.7). Maximian's original grant of *imperium* was god-given and therefore eternal (*aeternum*); it could never be revoked or resigned.¹⁵ The abdication, then, however honourable (Maximian was upholding an old agreement with Diocletian out of a sense of loyalty and desire for *laus*),¹⁶ was in a sense illegitimate (*inlicitam missionem*, Roma calls it, 11.1). And so to the climax of this section of the speech.

When Maximian brought *auctoritatem privati principis* (!) . . . *ad sedandos animos* in the City, Rome herself stretched out suppliant hands and cried *Quousque hoc, Maximiane, patiar me quati, te quiescere; mihi libertatem adimi, te usurpare tibi inlicitam missionem?* (11.1). Rome called upon Maximian to resume his imperial duty. He responded. Blithely the Panegyrist glosses over the fact that it was the usurper Maxentius, acknowledged heretofore by none, who had thrown a cloak of legitimacy over Maximian.¹⁷ Hence the mention of those popular

¹³See 1.1. C. H. V. Sutherland is wrong to deny that Constantine has been promoted to the rank of Augustus, *Roman Imperial Coinage* 6 (London 1967) 13 (cf. 29); cf. T. D. Barnes, *JRS* (1973) 41, note 143.

¹⁴The exact date is controversial. I do not accept the arguments of J. Lafaurie, "Dies Imperii Constantini Augusti: 25 décembre 307," *Mélanges André Piganiol* 2 (Paris 1966) 795–806, much less those of P. Bruun, "Constantine's *Dies Imperii* and *Quinquennalia* in the light of the early solidi of Trier," *NC* 9 (1969) 177–205 and "Constantine's Change of *Dies Imperii*," *Arctos* 9 (1975) 11–29 in favour of a December 307 date. But if P. Strauss is right in holding that the PLUR (or MULT) NATAL FEL coins of Maximian Augustus and Constantine Caesar refer to Constantine's *natalis imperii* of July 25 then the date will have to be pushed down from the traditional March 31.

¹⁵Cf. 12.6; 1.1 (*velis nolis semper Auguste*); 7.6.

¹⁶9.2.

¹⁷Lactantius *Mort. Pers.* 26.7: *Patri suo post depositum imperium in Campania moranti purpuram mittit et bis Augustum nominat.*

demonstrations of 298/299 and 304: they herald and make more plausible the Panegyrist's presentation of Rome's appeal in the winter of 306/307.

Enough has been said to demonstrate that the passage 8.7–8 cannot be used, as Thomas and others do, to argue that Maximian was not in Rome in 303. That was pre-eminently, if not exclusively, Diocletian's year, his *Vicennalia*, and any reference to it here would be not only beside the point but very inappropriate, especially if Maximian had also been the butt of the free-speaking Roman populace whose outbursts had driven Diocletian precipitately from Rome.¹⁸ And surely Maximian *was* in Rome in 303, not only to share in the celebration of Diocletian's *Vicennalia*, at which time his titulature may have been adjusted to conform with that of his senior colleague,¹⁹ not only so as to be able to take up his eighth consulship on January 1, 304, but also to participate in the great Triumph over numerous nations, long delayed, but all the more magnificent for that.

Although there are some oddities about the surviving descriptions of this triumph, it would be difficult to dismiss it as a myth. Our earliest explicit notice of it is Eutropius (9.27.2):

Tamen uterque uno die privato habitu imperii insigne mutavit, Nicomediae Diocletianus, Hercules Mediolani, post triumphum inclitum, quem Romae ex numerosis gentibus egerant, pompa ferculorum inlustri, quo Narsei coniuges sororesque et liberi ante currum ducti sunt. Concesserunt tamen Salonas unus, alter in Lucaniam.

In other words he locates it just (?) before the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian in 305. He does not mention the *Vicennalia* of 303, but on what other occasion after the Persian victory in 298 could the two Emperors possibly have been at Rome together?²⁰ It is in that year that

¹⁸*Ibid.* 17.2–3: *cum libertatem populi Romani ferre non poterat, impatiens et aeger prorupit ex urbe impendentibus Kalendis Ianuariis quibus illi nonus consulatus deferebatur. Tredecim dies tolerare non potuit . . .* The story may be a topos (cf. Zosimus 2.29), but it is not without a certain plausibility, especially given the people's opportunities in the circus, where Vicennial games were doubtless held in 303. For the tradition of free speech at Rome in the early Empire see Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions* (Oxford 1976) esp. Chapter 7.

¹⁹So A. Chastagnol, "Les années régnales de Maximien Hercule en Égypte et les fêtes vicennales du 20 Novembre 303," *RN* 9 (1967) 54–81. Chastagnol bases his case largely on the assimilation of Diocletian's and Maximian's regnal years to be observed in the papyri, ca Nov.–Dec. 303. The question of Maximian's *dies imperii* is a vexed one. My concern is to explain the Panegyrist's combination at 8.8 of Maximian's eighth consulship (A.D. 304) and his twentieth year. There are two possibilities: first, the *dies imperii* is Maximian's proclamation as Augustus at some time in 286 and the adjustment in 303 explains why Maximian's twentieth year began before 305. The second possibility is that Maximian calculated his reign from 285, which would perhaps strengthen the case for believing Eutropius's claim (9.22.1) that he was Caesar before he was proclaimed Augustus.

²⁰For Diocletian's movements, see the pioneer study of T. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 (Berlin 1905) 289–290. The place of issue of only five codes from the years

Jerome places it in his Chronicle (a.2320):

Diocletianus et Maximianus Augusti insigni pompa Romae triumpharunt antecedentibus currum eorum Narsei coniuge sororibus liberis et omni praeda qua Parthos spoliaverant.

If it were certain that Jerome's notice derived from Eusebius' *Chronicle* it might be considered welcome confirmation of the fact of the triumph and its date. But Jerome's language recalls that of Eutropius, and it is possible that he drew this item from a later and less reliable source than Eusebius, if not from Eutropius himself; nor are Jordanes and Zonaras independent.²¹

And there is another snag. We happen to have, preserved in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *De Legationibus* but deriving from Peter Patricius, a very circumstantial account of the peace negotiations following the Persian War, naming the negotiators and their offices, and giving in some detail the terms of the peace treaty. At the close of the account we learn that upon Narses' acceptance of the terms his family was restored to him.²²

In view of this are we to reject the notice of Eutropius as worthless? No; there is an independent witness, who, comical as his version is as it stands, demonstrates that the triumph is no fiction and perhaps provides us with an explanation of the misunderstanding in the other sources. It is the Chronographer of 354, who provides in his section *Imperia Caesarum* items of information unknown elsewhere, including in his list of public

299–301 is known; all were issued at Antioch. In 302 Diocletian clearly remained in the East. There are good grounds for dating the rescript concerning the Manichees, issued at Alexandria on March 31st of an unspecified year, to 302; see T. D. Barnes, "Sossianus Hierocles and the Antecedents of the 'Great Persecution'," *HSCP* 80 (1976) 245 ff. Diocletian spent the winter of 302–303 in Nicomedia, whither he had come from the East (Lactantius *Mort. Pers.* 10.1 and 6). The chronology of the various edicts of persecution is tangled, but it is clear that he remained in Nicomedia for some time, whence he sent mandates to the West (Lactantius *ibid.* 15.6). Maximian was then in Italy, *ibid.*, presumably at Milan. When Diocletian journeyed west, it was to celebrate his *Vicennalia*. No meeting subsequent to 303 and prior to the abdication seems possible. Diocletian left Rome in haste on December 20th, 303 (Lactantius *Mort. Pers.* 17.2). Maximian evidently stayed in the City (*Pan.* 6/7. 8.8); he was there on April 21, 304, if the *Passio S. Sabini* may be believed.

²¹Jerome's *insigni pompa* recalls *pompa inlustri*, and *coniuge* for *coniuges* is an easy (subconscious, Christian?) alteration. Jordanes' account *Romana*, *MGH AA* 5.38–39, has affinities with Jerome's (but note the *uxoribus*). Zonaras (12.31) gives an account of the triumph which closely resembles Eutropius'; he brings forward the notice about the Emperor's retirement to link it with the notice of their abdication, and adds the phrase "and the leaders of other nations" to Narses' family when relating who was led in triumph. Although at first sight there is an impressive number of sources for the triumph, Enmann's *Kaisergeschichte* may lurk behind all those mentioned above.

²²Peter Patricius, fragment 14; Müller, *FHG* 4.189; Migne, *PG* 113.675 (*De Legationibus* 30 D *ad fin.*).

buildings, for instance, an *arcus novus*.²³ There are notices of the collapse of a balcony and the birth of quadruplets. Then we read: *regem Persarum cum omnibus gentibus et tunicas eorum ex margaritis numero XXXII circa templa domini posuerunt*. But rather than have the King of the Persians and other unfortunate adversaries lodged in temples in Rome, we had best imagine that their pictures or effigies were placed there. Similarly with the triumphal procession; effigies would have been carried, or perhaps persons made up to resemble the Persian royal family.²⁴

Finally, there is the oath, allegedly sworn to Diocletian in the Temple of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus. Its first and only appearance in the sources is in *Panegyric* 7/6 of A.D. 310, delivered shortly after Maximian's death, and the context is the folly and ingratitude of the latter. How unlike Diocletian he proved to be!

At enim divinum illum virum qui primus imperium et participavit et posuit consilii et facti sui non paenitet nec amisisse se putat quod sponte transcripsit . . . Hunc ergo illum, qui ab eo fuerat frater adscitus, puduit imitari, huic illum in Capitolini Iovis templo iurasse paenituit. Non miror quod etiam genero peieravit. (15.4-6)

To have any impact whatsoever a smear or a fabrication must have plausibility. How plausible would it be to claim that Maximian had sworn an oath to Diocletian in the Capitoline Temple if everyone knew that Diocletian and Maximian had not met in Rome in 303 (the only available date)? And how could people, even in Gaul seven years later, *not* have known the whereabouts of the Augusti when the *Vicen-*

²³Chronographer of 354, *MGH AA* 9.148. For the *arcus novus*, see H. Kähler, *Zwei Sockel eines Triumphbogens in Boboligarten zu Florenz* (Berlin and Leipzig 1936).

²⁴For a similar reconstruction see Ensslin, "Valerius Diocletianus (142)," *RE* 7A.2 (1948) 2487 ff. cols. 2487-2489, and "Maximianus," *RE* 14.2 (1930) 2509. Triumphal elements clearly appear on the "Arch of Galerius" at Thessalonika, but whether these are to be interpreted literally or allegorically is open to doubt. A. Alföldi, "Die Ausgestaltung des monarchischen Zeremoniells," *RömMitt.* 49 (1934) 99 (= *Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreiche* [Darmstadt 1970] 99), recognizes a VOTA scene and connects this with "Vota-Feiern," but in any case the arch will have been years in the building (cf. Arch of Constantine, almost three years) and it can furnish no precise date for an actual triumph.

The numismatic evidence is indecisive. Maximian is associated with the *vicennalia* on coins (*RIC* 6.172 no. 75; 281 nos. 11a-b; 312 nos. 10-13 XX MAXIMIANI (DIO-CLETIANI) AUG), but that no more implies Maximian's presence in Rome than the VOT XX CAESS coins for Constantius and VOTIS X SIC XX for Galerius (Trier, *RIC* 6.174 nos. 95, 99) imply the presence of the Caesars. Nor do the XX MAXIMIANI AUG issues prove that the occasion was Maximian's *Vicennalia* as well. These could be anticipatory vows. What then of the "Decennial Base" and the Vicennial base which must be associated with it, the whole forming a "Fünfsäulendenkmal" near the Rostra? (*CIL* 6.1203-1205; cf. *CIL* 8.4764; H. Kähler, *Das Fuenfsäulendenkmal fuer die Tetrarchen auf dem Forum Romanum*, *Monumenta Artis Romanae* 3 [Cologne 1964]). This is clearly assimilative, uniting in the one monument commemoration of anniversaries which fell, strictly speaking, on *three* separate occasions.

nalia were celebrated? The very mention of the oath, whether it be fact or fiction, must reinforce the conclusion that Maximian joined Diocletian in Rome in 303 for the grand celebration.²⁵

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²⁵The temple of Capitoline Jupiter was the ideal location for the alleged oath. Emperors visiting Rome would go there as a matter of course; for references see J. Straub, "Konstantins Verzicht auf den Gang zum Kapitol," *Historia* 4 (1955) 297-313. In addition the Emperors would have been known to have been at the Temple in 303, for triumphal processions started there. I make no pronouncement as to whether the oath is historical or not, but at least the two panegyrics which mention the abdication are mutually consistent, *Pan.* 6/7 with its *consilii olim . . . inter vos placiti* (9.2) and *Pan.* 7/6 not only mentioning an oath (15.6) but relating that (*Diocletianum*) *consilii et facti sui non paenitet* (15.4).

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