

XXVI.—The Prefects of Egypt under Tiberius

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Reinmuth lists the prefects of Egypt in Tiberius' reign as follows:

"L. Seius Strabo	under Tiberius
C. Galerius	Febr.—Mar. 23, c. 31
Hiberus, acting prefect,	c. 32
A. Avilius [sic] Flaccus	c. 32, autumn 38." ¹

But Dio provides two other names which, omitted by Reinmuth, are rejected by Milne. Dio relates that Aemilius Rectus, prefect of Egypt, sent to Rome a larger tax revenue than was called for, and received from Tiberius the rebuke that he wished his sheep shorn not flayed.² And the same passage of Dio which names the acting prefect Hiberus, states that he succeeded Vitrasius Pollio.³

Since there is good evidence in papyri and inscriptions that a Lucius Aemilius Rectus was prefect under Claudius and a Gaius Vitrasius Pollio under Gaius, Milne rejects the Rectus and Pollio of Dio, "who wrote nearly two centuries after this time," as doublets, and suggests explanations for the occurrence of the names in Dio. "As regards Aemilius Rectus . . . it is easy to suppose that Dio had got hold of a good story about Tiberius and a prefect, . . . and to add verisimilitude to it tacked on the name of a man whom he knew to have been prefect about this time."⁴ This is to me singu-

¹ O. W. Reinmuth, *The Prefects of Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian* 131f. So, too, J. G. Milne, *A History of Egypt under Roman Rule* 12.

² D.C. 57.10.5. Although Reinmuth omits this Rectus from his list of prefects he retains Dio's anecdote in his text, p. 60, and Rectus appears there as Tiberius' prefect; furthermore, that passage is indexed (p. 147) together with the references to Claudius' prefect, s.v. L. Aemilius Rectus.

³ D.C. 58.19.6. In Philo *Flacc.* 1.2, where Hiberus is also mentioned, G has βήρουν, the other MSS., σεβήρουν; Cohn and Reiter (1915) emend to Ἰβήρουν, and there can be no doubt of this correction.

⁴ Milne, *op. cit.* 279f. Milne even remarks, "It is not of course impossible that two men of the same name may have held the same office within a brief period—in the second century two T. Flavii Titiani were prefects with an interval of something over thirty years—but it is unlikely" (279). It was certainly not uncommon in senatorial posts; there seems no reason to suppose equestrian posts were any different. Casual

larly unconvincing. The anecdote is told also by Suetonius,⁵ but without Rectus' name; I should suppose that Suetonius and Dio alike excerpted it from an earlier source, Dio retaining the prefect's name, which Suetonius, who wished to generalize, was not interested to set down. Milne's alternative suggestion that "Rectus was not prefect but held some lower office, such as *dioketes*, in the reign of Tiberius, and was later appointed prefect," he himself rightly rejects on the basis that "the part played by Aemilius Rectus in the anecdote of Dio properly belongs to the prefect."

Stein accepts the Aemilius Rectus of Dio as separate and distinct from the Lucius Aemilius Rectus, prefect under Claudius.⁶ We shall see (*infra*) that if Dio's Rectus is admitted, he will have been prefect at the beginning of Tiberius' reign; there would be, therefore, sufficient interval between the incumbencies of the two Aemilii Recti to allow for their being father and son as Stein supposes.⁷

With the alleged doublet of Polliones Milne seems to me even less successful. "The statement concerning Vitrasius Pollio seems to be more intimately concerned with the individuality of the person in question; but here too an origin of confusion may be conjectured. Seneca (*Cons. ad Helviam* 19.4) mentions that his uncle, who had been prefect of Egypt for sixteen years, died on his way home: it is almost certain that this must have been C. Galerius, who is known to have been prefect in 23, and his death probably took place in 31 or 32. Hiberus the freedman mentioned by Dio, also

survey of provincial governors in the period discloses the following examples; more diligent search would probably find others.

C. Sentius Saturninus, cos. 19 B.C., *legatus Syriae*, and his son Cn., cos. A.D. 4, *legatus Syriae*.

Paullus Fabius Maximus, *procos. Asiae*, and his son, Paullus Fabius Persicus, probably *procos. Asiae*.

C. Asinius Gallus, *procos. Asiae*, and his son C. Asinius Pollio, *procos. Asiae*.

Cn. Calpurnius Piso, cos. 7 B.C., *procos. Africae*, and his son L., cos. A.D. 27, *procos. Africae*, and the latter's son L., cos. A.D. 57, *procos. Africae*.

Cossus Cornelius Lentulus, cos. A.D. 25, probably *legatus Germaniae Superioris*, and his brother, Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus, cos. A.D. 26, *legatus Germaniae Superioris*.

Cf. on the foregoing, *PIR*.

⁵ Praesidibus onerandas tributo provincias suadentibus rescripsit boni pastoris esse tondere pecus, non deglubere, *Tib.* 32.2.

⁶ *PIR*², A, 394, 395.

⁷ The Quintus Veranius of Germanicus' suite used to be considered by some identical with Claudius' *legatus* of the same name, until an inscription proved them different persons, *CPh* 26 (1931) 172-177.

died in office and was succeeded by Flaccus (Philo, *adv. Flaccum* 2), probably in 32. If Dio's account is correct, Vitrasius Pollio must have come between Galerius and Hiberus and also died in office—which would make a remarkable succession of fatalities among the prefects in the course of a few months. It seems possible that Dio, knowing that an acting prefect had died and that a freedman had succeeded a dead prefect under Tiberius, and that Pollio had been prefect about this time, got his notes mixed, and wrote of Pollio having died in office and been succeeded by Hiberus when he was really alluding to the death of Galerius immediately on leaving office, the succession of Hiberus and the death of Hiberus in office.”⁸ But Hiberus did not succeed a “dead prefect” unless it was Pollio, for Galerius had retired from office before his death; and Galerius did not die a natural death (cf. *infra*), so he makes no contribution to any coincidental “succession of fatalities.” Nor would I attach any significance to the deaths of Galerius, Pollio and Hiberus “in the course of a few months” (it could have been between two and three years, 31–33, as will appear *infra*), even if that of Galerius had been natural; Galerius' predecessor, Strabo, appears also to have died in office (cf. *infra*), but that has no significance either. Finally and much more important, Hiberus, who was a freedman, not a knight, and acting prefect, not prefect, must surely have succeeded a prefect who died in office leaving an unexpected vacancy, rather than one who retired, doubtless at least with Tiberius' prior knowledge and consent, if not at Tiberius' instance.⁹

The Polliones are separated by less than a decade, and can hardly, therefore, have been father and son. But nothing prevents supposing them either brothers or cousins.¹⁰

Milne concludes: “In any case it seems safer, till independent evidence of the prefecture of an Aemilius Rectus or a Vitrasius Pollio under Tiberius is found, to leave these names out of the list.”¹¹

⁸ Milne, *op. cit.* 280.

⁹ It does Tiberius injustice to ignore that Hiberus was appointed *acting* prefect, and write: “Tiberius, though too proud to submit tamely to domestic influences, allowed a freedman to become prefect of Egypt,” H. Mattingly, *The Imperial Civil Service of Rome* 40; followed by V. Scramuzza, *The Emperor Claudius* 257.

¹⁰ It may be noted in passing that we know also of a Vitrasius Pollio who was Claudius' procurator in Egypt in A.D. 41, *PLond* 1912 (in H. I. Bell, *Jews and Christians in Egypt*) line 43; cf. Plin. *Nat.* 36.57. It seems impossible to identify him with either of the Polliones mentioned above; he could be the son of either.

¹¹ Milne, *op. cit.* 281.

The wait for independent evidence may be long or even perpetual. To me it seems safer to be less cavalier toward such evidence as we have, to accept Dio's statements, at least tentatively and provisionally, pending the appearance of sound evidence which really contradicts him.

There are, then, as prefects of Egypt under Tiberius, certainly Strabo, Galerius, Hiberus and Flaccus, and probably Rectus and Pollio. It is, I believe, possible to show that these six constitute a complete and continuous succession through Tiberius' reign.

Seneca relates how his aunt suffered the loss by shipwreck of her husband, who had been prefect of Egypt for sixteen years;¹² and Seneca's return to Rome with his aunt after the shipwreck can be dated *circa* 31 by reference to his life and career. This prefect can only have been Galerius, since we know he was in office in 23.¹³ Both Milne and Reinmuth cite this passage of Seneca to date the end of Galerius' prefecture *circa* 31, but, astonishingly, neither applies the same evidence to approximate the date of his appointment. We may set *circa* 16-*circa* 31 as the dates of Galerius' term as prefect, noting that the long incumbency accords with Tiberius' custom.¹⁴

It will be convenient now to work backward from the end of Tiberius' reign. We have documentary evidence that Avillius Flaccus was prefect in 33, and literary evidence that he had been appointed to succeed Hiberus, probably in 32, and was recalled under indictment by Gaius in the autumn of 38.¹⁵

Dio, writing of A.D. 32, says: "And at this time when Vitrasius Pollio the prefect of Egypt died, he [Tiberius] entrusted the province temporarily (*χρόνον τινα*) to a certain Hiberus, an imperial freedman."¹⁶ Dessau conjectured with probability that Hiberus was a freedman of Antonia and bore the name Marcus Antonius Hiberus.¹⁷ He died shortly after and was succeeded by Flaccus. Hiberus' incumbency then, is dated 32 or possibly 32/33. Vitrasius Pollio

¹² Sen. *Helv.* 19.4.

¹³ Stein, with his usual admirable conservatism, writes *puto* of the identification with Galerius, *PIR*² A, 617.

¹⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 1.80.2 and more especially 4.6.5; cf. F. B. Marsh, *The Reign of Tiberius* 158f.

¹⁵ Reinmuth, *op. cit.* 132 and references there.

¹⁶ D.C. 58.19.6.

¹⁷ *PIR* H, 118. M. Antonius Hiberus, consul A.D. 133, supplies the basis for the conjecture.

cannot date back of 31, since there would hardly in that case be room for Strabo before Galerius. Pollio was, therefore, prefect 31–32, or even possibly 32 only, and had been appointed to replace Galerius. Galerius was prefect for sixteen years. If, then, he was succeeded by Pollio in 31, he had been appointed in 16; if in 32, his incumbency had commenced in 17. We know from Dio¹⁸ that Lucius Seius Strabo was prefect of Egypt. In A.D. 14 at Tiberius' accession Strabo was praetorian prefect.¹⁹ Shortly thereafter his son Sejanus became his colleague. They had been colleagues "for some time" (*χρόνῳ μὲν τινι*)²⁰ when Strabo was appointed to Egypt. The year 15 will satisfy that statement of Dio, and as a date for Sejanus' becoming sole praetorian prefect will accord with the progressive advance of his career.²¹ Strabo appears to have died in office, if Hirschfeld, as seems probable, correctly emends a passage of the elder Pliny.²² Was there an interim appointment, like that of Hiberus, between Strabo and Galerius, of which we have no record? Aside from such a stop-gap, it seems most probable that Galerius was Strabo's successor. Strabo, then, was prefect *circa* 15 to 16 or 17.

Thus accounted for are the years 15 to 38, with Strabo, Galerius, Pollio, Hiberus and Flaccus in succession. There remains Aemilius Rectus. The passage of Dio²³ which mentions Rectus is part of the historian's narrative of A.D. 14; but since it is an illustrative anecdote, it affords no proof that Rectus was prefect then. But A.D. 14/15 is open for his incumbency. The only other possibilities are to place him between Strabo and Galerius or between Galerius and Pollio; at neither of these points is there room for him with any probability. So he seems to belong in 14/15; hence Dio's mention of him at that time. To the same date lead also the following considerations. A prefect appointed by Tiberius might reasonably be expected to know and observe his policies; it seems that Rectus must have been Augustus' appointee, incumbent at Tiberius' accession. And the excessive remittance of taxes would be near the time of Tiberius' accession, that is, before his attitude and policy

¹⁸ D.C. 57.19.6.

¹⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 1.7.

²⁰ D.C. *loc. cit.*

²¹ Cf. chap. 3 in my study of *Drusus Julius Caesar*, to be published shortly.

²² *Nat.* 36.197; *H* 8 (1874) 473 (= *Kl. Schr.* 793).

²³ 57.10.5.

had become known to the incumbent prefect. The latest evidence on Augustan prefects is that which documents M. Magius Maximus as prefect at the end of May, A.D. 12.²⁴ I suggest that Rectus was appointed by Augustus as successor to Maximus in 12 or 13 and served until the appointment of Strabo by Tiberius in 15.

We have thus the following table of prefects of Egypt under Tiberius:

Aemilius Rectus	circa 13–15
L. Seius Strabo	15–16 (or 17)
C. Galerius	16 (or 17)—31 (or 32)
Vitrasius Pollio	31–32 (or 32)
(? M. Antonius) Hiberus (acting prefect)	32 (or 32–33)
A. Avillius Flaccus	32 (or 33)—38

It is desirable to dispose of Marcus Magius Maximus, who seems about to usurp a place among the Tiberian prefects. He is authenticated as prefect under Augustus in A.D. 12, and a passage of Philo is understood to say that he was prefect a second time.²⁵ Reinmuth remarks, "Philo's statement that Maximus was prefect a second time is not yet supported by other evidence." But an inscription has been referred to his second incumbency and dated in Tiberius' reign.²⁶ The inscription, from Alexandria, is thus reproduced:

]ω Τιβέριος
α]νέθηκαν λς'
Μαξιμω ἐπάρχ[ω

The commentary of Cagnat and Merlin reads as follows: "Date; 20–21 ap. J.-C. Magius Maximus fut deux fois préfet d'Egypte (Philon, *in Flacc.*, 10): sous Auguste, en 10–11 ap. J.-C.; sous Tibère, en 20–21."

In an inscription of this type, it is quite impossible that the emperor's name should appear in the nominative case; Τιβέριος therefore, cannot be the Emperor Tiberius; it is the name of a private dedicant; also, we have seen that in the seventh year of Tiberius' reign Galerius was prefect. The passage of Philo reads:

²⁴ Reinmuth, *op. cit.* 131 and references there.

²⁵ Reinmuth *loc. cit.*

²⁶ *Ann. Ep.* 1934, no. 228.

Τῆς γὰρ ἡμετέρας γερουσίας, ἣν ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης Σεβαστὸς ἐπιμελησομένην τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν εἴλετο μετὰ τὴν τοῦ γενάρχου τελευτὴν διὰ τῶν πρὸς Μάγιον Μάξιμον ἐντολῶν μέλλοντα πάλιν [ἀπ'] Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ τῆς χώρας ἐπιτροπεύειν, κτλ. This is a clear statement that Augustus made certain arrangements about the Jewish community of Alexandria in his *mandata* to Magius Maximus, when Maximus was appointed prefect for the second time. Clearly Maximus' second term was in the reign of Augustus, presumably including A.D. 12 when he is documented, and his first term must have been earlier in the same reign.

There remains, at all events, nothing to indicate that the Maximus of the inscription was Magius Maximus. The cognomen Maximus appears twice again in our present list of Egyptian prefects; viz., Lucius Laberius Maximus and Gaius Vibius Maximus. Laberius was prefect in 83 under Domitian; but in the seventh year of Domitian (87), Gaius Septimius Vegetus was prefect (85–88). Vibius, however, was prefect 103–107, and is documented by an inscription "in the seventh year of Trajan."²⁷ I should incline to restore the name of Gaius Vibius Maximus in the Alexandrine inscription.

²⁷ CIL 3.38; cf. Reinmuth, *op. cit.* 133.