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VIII.—A Note on the Classes of Roman Officials in the Age of Diocletian

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The bureaucratic hierarchy of the Roman Empire was reformed by Diocletian in the years around 297 A.D. Until 297 high officials such as *tricenarii*, *ducenarii*, *centenarii*, had been paid in gold *sestertii*. They maintained their customary allowances in a period of fierce inflation. After 297 *ducenarii* and *centenarii* were no longer high officials. They had the rank of the officers commanding 200 and 100 soldiers, respectively. They had nothing to do with the equestrian officials, called *ducenarii* and *centenarii*, of the previous age.

Ducenarii and centenarii before the reform of Diocletian. In periods of severe inflation private people as well as the Administration often are compelled to use other measures of value than the inflated currency.

It has already been shown how, after the *Edict de pretiis rerum venalium* of 301 had proved ineffective, the price of a *modius castrensis* of wheat was in some cases adopted as a unit of value.¹ Payments in gold and in silver were requested very often by the Byzantine Administration. In the period preceding the introduction of the *solidus* of 4 *scruples* by Constantine gold and silver were often paid in gold and silver pounds. After Constantine gold was paid more often in *solidi*. Gold and silver, however, were paid frequently in debased currency at the rate of exchange of the day.²

In the early Byzantine age owing to the very low and very variable purchasing power of gold, lower cash wages prevailed and those of the employees of the Administration usually were paid partly in kind to make sure that the wage-earners had enough to live on. In large part, soldiers' wages were paid in *annonae* in accordance with a system quite different from that used in the first and second centuries after Christ. Payment of wages in *annonae* became so general in the Byzantine age that even the highest officers received their allowances partly in *annonae*, in kind, and

¹ A. Segrè, "Inflation and its Implication in the Early Byzantine Time," *Byz* 15 (1940/41) 279.

² A. Segrè, *Metrologia*, p. 471ff.; "Some Traits of Monetary Inflation in Antiquity and the Middle Ages," *Seminar* (An annual extraordinary number of *The Jurist*) 1 (1942) 20ff. *Metrologia* 471f.; *Byz* 15 (1940/41) 275ff.

partly in annonae adaeratae, i.e. in money.³ This system of payments was not new, of course. In the third century, before the age of Diocletian, high officers of the army received their allowances partly in money and partly in kind. These allowances, however, were not reckoned in annonae as happened later, probably in the beginning of the fourth century when the system of the payments in annonae had become general.⁴

The Administration reckoned in annonae in order to ensure the supply of food for the army in a period of very fierce inflation. This calculation in annonae was a natural consequence of the system of Diocletian, which introduced new units of reckoning in the Roman Empire, such as iuga, capita and annonae. This system of reckoning remained in the Byzantine Administration centuries after the stabilization of the Byzantine currency.

Before the general introduction of the system of annonae the salaries of civilian officials of the Roman Administration were reckoned in sestertii at the rate of 100 sestertii to an aureus. The aurei of the age of Caracalla and Severus Alexander usually weighed 1/50 gold pound,⁵ in the age of Diocletian 1/60 gold pound,⁶ after Constantine 1/72 gold pound.⁷

The Roman procuratores, who since the time of Hadrian and the Antonines were divided into four sharply defined classes, tricenarii, ducenarii, centenarii, sexagenarii, received 300,000, 200,000,

³ A. Segrè, *Byz* 16 (1943) 393ff.

⁴ This system of allowances was already used for high officers in the army in the third century as is shown by the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*. Valerian (*Vita Claudii* 14) granted to Claudius, as tribune of the 5th Martian legion, 3,000 modii of wheat, 6,000 modii of barley, 2,000 pounds of bacon, 3,500 sextarii of well-aged wine, etc., each year. To the allowances in kind he added 150 aurei philippeii and for a New Year's gift 47 philippeii and 60 thirds of philippeii. In *Vita Aureliani* 9 are listed the allowances granted by Valerian to Aurelian in the year 256. These allowances were registered in the *scrinia* of the praefectura urbis and consisted of allowances in kind and in money. In *Vita Probi* 4 are listed the allowances granted by Valerian to Probus as tribune militum. The allowances are in kind and in money. (For the annona in the Byzantine age see A. Segrè, *Byz*. 16 [1943] 393ff.) For the general problem of allowances in money, in money and kind, and exclusively in kind in Egypt in the first to the seventh centuries after Christ see Mickwitz, *Geld und Wirtschaft* 132ff. There was a certain trend toward allowances in kind in the period of high inflation, but they did not lose their importance in the Byzantine period after the stabilization of the currency in the fifth century. Moreover we must not forget that Egypt as well as the other provinces of the Roman Empire did not have a genuine monetary economy even in the period of stabilized currency.

⁵ *Metrologia* 359 and 366; and cf. Louis C. West, *Coin Standards* 121-5.

⁶ *Metrologia* 433 and *Byz* 15 (1940/41) 254f.

⁷ *Metrologia* 465ff.

100,000, 60,000 sestertii a year, respectively.⁸ The allowances in sestertii of the officials in the late third and early fourth century were reckoned in aurei but were paid probably largely in the debased currency of the time at the legal rate of the exchange of that currency with the aureus. In other words, the allowances of the procuratores were reckoned in an account unit, the gold nummi, which, as account units, became usual in the third century after Christ, even before the period of the great inflation. In my opinion in the years about 250 A.D. the aureus was still reckoned at 100 sestertii or 25 denarii. Eventually the aureus made an agio on the silver coins, but probably more on the provincial coins than on the Roman silver denarii.⁹ No evidence remains of a rising rate of exchange of the aureus with the denarius in the age before the great inflation.

Accordingly in the *Corpus Iuris* the compilers interpolated the sums of money expressed in sestertii in the Roman classical texts, reckoning the sestertius as 1/100 aureus. Whenever they reckoned 10,000 sestertii as the equivalent of an aureus,¹⁰ they had in mind Byzantine solidi of 180, 210 and 288 folles, respectively, equivalent to 7,200, 8,400 and 11,520 noummia. The compilers obviously considered the solidus as the equivalent of 10,000 noummia and the Byzantine noummion as a nummus = sestertius.¹¹

The practice of reckoning the allowances of high officers in gold sestertii in the third century before the period of the great inflation was continued in the age of Diocletian, probably until 297. With this system of reckoning the allowances of the high officials of the Roman administration could be stabilized in the period of the great inflation.¹² The Roman procuratores through the reckoning of their salaries in gold sestertii of the ancient coinage maintained their allowances in gold in a period when the Roman currency had been completely altered by a severe inflation.

⁸ Hirschfeld, *Verwaltungsbeamten* 432ff.; Kubitschek, *RE* s.v. "Centenarii"; O. Seeck, *RE* s.v. "Ducenarii." H. Last, *CAH* 11.430. The allowances of the officers were reckoned in the old coinage. For the old currency in this age see A. Segrè, *Byz* 15 (1940/41) 256ff.

⁹ See A. Segrè, *Metrologia* 427.

¹⁰ *Vocabularium iurisprudentiae romanae*, s.v. "aureus"; G. Mickwitz, *Geld und Wirtschaft* 37.

¹¹ Segrè, *Metrologia* 473ff.; *Byz* 15 (1940/41) 272.

¹² In *CIL* 13.3161 (before 238) the allowance of a tribunus militum of 25,000 sestertii in gold means that he should receive an equivalent of 250 aurei in the usual currency.

This assertion may be demonstrated by an analysis of Eumenes *Or. pro inst. schol.* 11.2; 14.5; 16.3. Eumenes, a rhetor, as magister sacrae memoriae was a tricenarius, i.e., he was entitled to a salary of 300,000 nummi or sestertii.¹³ In 297 he was appointed by Constantius as director of the Manianae schools of Autun with an allowance of 600,000 nummi to be paid by the town of Autun. He accepted the appointment, but he gave back the money to his native town for the restoration of the schools ruined by the revolt of the Bagaudae. The nummi mentioned in the panegyric of Eumenes, called (by him) also sestertii (11.2), have been understood, incorrectly, by Seeck, followed by E. Stein, as antoniniani or double denarii.¹⁴ This metrological interpretation of Seeck has no basis. In the time of Diocletian, after the *Edict de p.r.v.* of 301 nummus meant the follis, while nummus italicus meant the antoninianus. Before this Edict, the follis and the antoninianus had the same value; both were worth 25 of the denarii mentioned in the Edict. Later the follis was worth 25 denarii and the antoninianus 12½ denarii.¹⁵ If Eumenes, a tricenarius, as magister sacrae memoriae¹⁶ had been paid with antoniniani or folles of 25 denarii with the rate of exchange of the gold pound equalling 50,000 denarii (*Edict de p.r.v.* XXXIa) his allowances would have been 150 gold pounds, corresponding to 9,000 solidi of Diocletian of 1/60 pound or to 10,800 solidi of 4 scruples. The gold pound in the year 301 was 2,000 folles or nummi of 25 denarii or 4,000 antoniniani when the antoninianus had been devaluated to 1/2 follis. In 301 the aureus of 1/60 gold pound was worth 33½ folles.

¹³ Eumenes, *Paneg. de inst. scol.* 11.2: Salarium me liberalissimi Principes ex huius reipublicae viribus in sexcentis milibus nummum accipere iusserunt, non quoniam non amplius tribuere commodis meis vellent, in quem multo maiora et prius et postea praemia contulerunt; sed ut trecena illa sestertia, quae sacrae memoriae magister acceperam in honore privati huius magisterii addita pari parte geminarent. 3 Hoc ego salarium, quantum ad honorem pertinet adoratum [sic!] accipio, et in accepti ratione praescribo; sed expensum referre patriae meae cupio et ad restitutionem huius operis quoad usum poposcerit destinare. Cf. also 14.5; 16.3. Probably we have to read *adoratus* instead of *adoratum* (see for *adoratio* Seeck *RE* s.v.).

¹⁴ Seeck, *RE* s.v. "Ducenarius"; E. Stein, *Gesch. der spätöm. Reiches*, 249.

¹⁵ A. Segrè, *Byz* 15 (1940/41) 249ff. W. Schwabacher, s.v. "Nummus" 1459, who understands nummus italicus in the papyri of the end of the fourth century as sestertius, is not correct. In *Th.* 13.3.31 (321) probably the nummus is the follis of 25 denarii (A. Segrè, *Byz* 15 [1940/41] 267). In *Th.* 7.20.3 (320), the follis cannot be the piece of 25 denarii (*Byz* 15 [1940/41] 266f.).

¹⁶ On the magister sacrae memoriae, see Fluss, *RE* s.v. "a memoria" and for the memoriales see Ensslin, s.v.

Considering that the trend of the currency was toward inflation in the period before and after the Edict¹⁷ the salary of Eumenes of 300,000 nummi = antoniniani in the year 296 would have been much higher than 150 gold pounds, probably close to 200 gold pounds.¹⁸ A salary of a tricenarius, even at 150 gold pounds, was extravagant compared with the allowance of a tricenarius in the age before the severe inflation—and with the allowances of the highest officials of the late Byzantine age.¹⁹

In conclusion, we must assume that the nummus or sestertius of the oration of Eumenes was a sestertius of the old denarius. Eumenes, as magister sacrae memoriae, received an allowance of 3,000 aurei, the equivalent of the 300,000 sestertii. The pay due to a tricenarius had not been altered before the reforms of Diocletian of 297 A.D. The salaries of the tricenarii, ducenarii and centenarii²⁰ in the third century with a solidus of 1/50 gold pound would have been, respectively, 60, 40, 20 gold pounds, with an aureus of 1/60 gold pound 50, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ and 16 $\frac{2}{3}$ pounds. Eumenes received 50 gold pounds as magister sacrae memoriae, 100 gold pounds as director of the Manianae schools.

The salaries of the officials of the age of Diocletian, measured in gold, are not very far from those granted by Justinian. This emperor increased considerably the allowances of the high officials in the hope of combating the deep-rooted system of corruption in the Byzantine administration.²¹ According to *Edict XIII*, cap. 3, the Dux and Augustalis of Egypt received allowances of 40 gold pounds (2,880 solidi) as full allowance *ὑπὲρ σιτήσεων . . . καὶ ὑπὲρ σινηθείων καὶ καλανδικῶν*. The text reads: “. . . and we are not giving to him (the Augustalis) the salary (*παραψυχή*) which he receives from the Treasury which until now the spectabilis Augustalis received, namely 50 annonae and 50 capita, but with a great increase we grant to him 40 gold pounds yearly for the annona, the *σινήθεια* and the *καλανδικά*.” The assessores of the Augustalis (cap. IV)

¹⁷ A. Segrè, *Byz* 15 (1940/41) 250f., 275ff., and 260ff.

¹⁸ Supposing that the speed of the inflation had been about the same in the years preceding the edict as in the years following, cf. *Byz* 15 (1940/41) 275ff.

¹⁹ The nummus in the passage of Eumenes could not have been the sestertius (i.e. the fourth of a denarius) of the *Edict* because in this case the salary of Eumenes would have been extremely low.

²⁰ On the salaries of the proximi of 40,000 sestertii see *CIL* 6.8619 and Hirschfeld, *op. cit.* (note 8) 463.

²¹ A. Segrè, *Métrologia* 359f. G. Rouillard, *L'Administration byzantine*² 40.

were granted 5 pounds of gold ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν and 1,000 solidi for the staff while previously the staff received only a third of this sum.²²

The dux Libyae, in place of 90 annonae in kind and 120 capita, received 1,005¼ solidi (the reading is very uncertain) and, in place of the 50 annonae in gold and the 50 capita, 450 solidi and, for his staff, 187½ solidi, while his soldiers were maintained by the Treasury.²³ The salaries of the Dux and Augustalis of Egypt were higher than those of the Governors of Thracia, Paphlagonia, Lycaonia, Isauria, and of the Dux Africae, who received 1,582 solidi, which included the allowances of his aides. The salaries of the Dux and Augustalis amounted to 40 gold pounds, i.e. the salary of a ducenarius at the beginning of the third century, while the governors of the province were paid as a rule about 20 gold pounds, i.e. not much more than the centenarii. But the allowances of the Byzantine officials of the age of Justinian were actually higher than those of the high officials of the same class in the early third century, because the purchasing power of gold was much greater in the time of Justinian than in the third century.²⁴

Ducenarii and centenarii after the reform of Diocletian. After the great administrative reform of Diocletian²⁵ the ranks of ducenarius, centenarius and sexagenarius in the civil offices appear to correspond to the same ranks in the military career. A soldier began his career as tiro and later became eques, circitor, biarchus, centenarius, ducenarius, senator, primicerius, etc.²⁶ We are inclined to suppose that the civil ducenarius had a rank equal to a commander of 200 soldiers, that the centenarius corresponded to a centurion, etc.²⁷

²² Even the salary of the Dux Augustalis had been increased in order that he might keep his hands clean and attend to the cares of the administration. *Edict* 13.3, see Rouillard² (note 21) 40. In order that the officers in the provinces might not use their positions to extort money from the provincials with dishonest business officers in the provinces, they were forbidden to do business and particularly to buy estates and lend and borrow money. See Uxkull-Gyllenband, *Gnomon des Idios Logos* 70, p. 69ff. and 109, 110, p. 104.

²³ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine* 128. Rouillard² (note 21) 41.

²⁴ A. Segrè, *Byz* 16 (1943) 406ff.

²⁵ For the reform of the Government of the provinces under Diocletian see Ensslin *CAH* 12.392ff.

²⁶ Seeck *RE* s.v. "Ducenarius" 1753. For the ranks of the civilian officers on a military basis see Kübler, *Gesch. d. rom. Rechtes* 40 and for the ducenarii and centenarii in the Roman army Kübler *ibid.* 327, note 1.

²⁷ The appearance of sexagenarii with the centenarii and the ducenarii in *Th* 11.1.2 (315 [313]) and in *Th* 11.7.1 (315 [313]) could be an argument in support of a connection between the ducenarii, centenarii, etc., of the equestrian class and the centenarii and ducenarii of the period after Diocletian. We are however inclined to

The ranks of the *ducenarii*, *centenarii*, etc. after the reform of Diocletian had nothing to do with the high ranks of the *ducenarii* and *centenarii* of the previous age.²⁸ *Ducenarii* in the fourth century are lesser officers in the texts collected in Seeck *RE* s. v. "Ducenarius" 1753ff.

The condition of the *ducenarii* in the age after Diocletian is shown by *Codex Iust.* 1.27.1.21 (534). In this text the Praefectus Praetorio for the whole of Africa received for his *annonae* and *capita* 100 gold pounds, in *Codex Iust.* 1.27.2.20 (534) the Dux of Tripolitania as well as the *Duces* of Byzacena, of Numidia, of Mauritania, and of Sardinia with their staffs, received each 1582 *solidi* each year. In this text the *ducenarii* are officers of the staff of the Governor. The officers of the staff of the Governors of the African provinces were rewarded as follows: *adessor* 7 *annonae* and 4 *capita*, *primicerius* 5 *annonae* and 2 *capita*, *ducenarius* 3½ *annonae* and 1½ *capita*, *centenarius* 2½ *annonae* and 1 *capitum*. Moreover in the office of the Governor for one assessor and one *primicerius* there were 4 *ducenarii* and 6 *centenarii*. The *annonae* were reckoned at 5 *solidi*, the *capita* at 4 each; in money the *ducenarii* received 23½ *solidi* yearly, the *centenarii* 14½ *solidi* in all the African provinces.

The *ducenarii* were paid about 5 times as much as *privati* and about 100 times less than a *ducenarius* of the age before Diocletian. We may conclude that until 297, the year of the great reform of Diocletian, *ducenarii* and *centenarii* were high officers paid 200,000 and 100,000 *sestertii* each in gold, while the *ducenarii* and the *centenarii* of the years after the reform of Diocletian were minor officers in a quite different hierarchy.

suppose that this connection did not exist. *Centenarii* and *ducenarii* appear frequently in the *Codex Justinianus* (see R. Mayr, *Vocabularium Codicis Justiniani* s.v. "Ducenarius" 901 and s.v. "Centenarius" 603), *sexagenarii* appear only in *C* 11.19.1 = *Th* 11.7.1 already quoted. *Ducenarii* and *centenarii* are usually collectors of the arrears of the taxes as *exactores civitatis*.

²⁸ In *ILS* 1214 C. Caelius Saturninus, a senator under Constantine, began his career as *advocatus fisci per Italiam* and went through the ranks of *sexagenarius studiorum adiutor*, *sexagenarius a consiliis sacris*, *magister libellorum*, *magister studiorum*, etc., and became at last *vicarius praefecturae urbis*. Probably C. Caelius Saturninus began his *cursus honorum* under Diocletian at a time when *sexagenarius* and *ducenarius* meant an office rewarded with 60,000 and 200,000 *sestertii*.