

## THE NOTITIA DIGNITATUM AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF EGYPT

### Observations on Some Military Camps and Place Names in Upper Egypt

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A few toponyms occurring in § 31 of the section on the Orient in the *Notitia Dignitatum* and in the *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti* are the subject of the following paper. I have made a number of similar observations on military camps and place names in Lower Egypt in an article already published in the ZPE.<sup>1</sup> My work in this field was inspired by an invitation to serve as a co-editor of a new topographical lexicon to be published by A.M. Hakkert. Such a task is greatly facilitated, of course, by the fact that thanks to the efforts of S. Daris the great project of A. Calderini's *Dizionario dei nomi Geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco-romano* has now been completed and though this work has not always found acclaim,<sup>2</sup> one should be grateful to the compilers of the *Dizionario*, as their collection of materials is a real 'Fundgrube'.

First a few general remarks: it is well known that the part dealing with the Orient in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (hereafter the *Notitia* 3 is a source of paramount importance for our knowledge of the disposition of army units in early Byzantine Egypt.<sup>4</sup> § 31 of this part lists the army units under the command of the *Dux Thebaidos* and their disposition, while § 28 contains a similar list of troops under the command of the *Comes limitis Aegypti* and their disposition. The border line between the two territories appears to coincide with the boundary between the Oxyrhynchite and Hermopolite nomes; i.e. the Oxyrhynchite nome is the southernmost part of Lower Egypt ('*Aegyptus*' in the terminology of the *Notitia*.), whereas the Hermopolite nome is the northernmost part of the Thebaid or Upper Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

I need not enter here into the complex question about the date of the compilation of the *Notitia*. Let it suffice to assume that the *Notitia* was compiled originally toward the end of the fourth century.<sup>6</sup>

Editors and other students of the *Notitia* have always tried to identify place names occurring in this source with toponyms mentioned elsewhere in classical and post-classical literature. Of outstanding interest in this respect is the so-called *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*

<sup>1</sup>ZPE 87 (1990) 291-295.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. M. Drew-Bear, *Le Nome Hermopolite. Toponymes et sites* (Missoula 1979), xii: "Le Dizionario --- ne constitue, de plus en plus, qu'un travail de compilation hâtive et sans critique."

<sup>3</sup>I have used the edition of the *Notitia* by O. Seeck (Berlin 1876, repr. Frankfurt 1962).

<sup>4</sup>Essential bibliography: J. Maspero, *L'armée romaine de l'Égypte d'Auguste à Dioclétien*, Cairo 1918; D. van Berchem, *L'armée de Dioclétien et la réforme constantinienne*, Paris 1952; idem, *L'occupation militaire de la haute Égypte sous Dioclétien*, *Roman Frontier Studies* 1967. *Proc. VIIth Internat. Congr.* (Tell Aviv 1971) 123-27; R.M. Price, 'The Limes of Lower Egypt' (in: *Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum, Papers presented to the conference at Oxford, December 13 - 15, 1974*, ed. by R. Goodburn & P. Bartholomew, BAR Suppl. Ser. 15 [1976]) 143-154; A.K. Bowman, 'The Military Occupation of Upper Egypt in the Reign of Diocletian', *BASP* 15 (1978) 25-38.

<sup>5</sup>Actually, § 28 of the *Notitia* contains also an indication of a contemporaneous further sub-division of *Aegyptus* into the provinces of (a) *Aegyptus* 'properly speaking', (b) *Arcadia*, and (c) *Augustamnica*. For *Augustamnica* cf. J. Lallemand, *L'administration civile de l'Égypte de l'avènement de Dioclétien à la création du diocèse*, pp. 53-54; originally (i.e. starting with A.D. 341) it covered the same area as the former *Heptanomia* or *Aegyptus Herculia* (i.e. the Oxyrhynchite, the Arsinoite and possibly the Herakleopolite nomes) and the Eastern half of the Delta; later on (after A.D. 386, but before A.D. 399) its territory was limited to only the Eastern Delta, while the area of the former *Herculia* was re-baptised as *Arcadia*. Price, *op.cit.* pp. 145-46, convincingly demonstrates that by shifting ll. 37-39 to a place in between ll. 24-25 or 25-26 a distinction between *Augustamnica* and *Arcadia* can be made. I have expressed my acceptance of Price's idea already in my ZPE article referred to above in fn. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Price, *op.cit.* [fn.4] 146.

(hereafter the *Itinerarium*),<sup>7</sup> primarily a list of place names with indications of the distance between each place and the next one in this same list. There is no doubt that the list (in its present form compiled ca. A.D. 300, i.e. a century before the *Notitia* were compiled) referred to the locations of *mansiones* where travellers could stay.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, since the publications of documentary papyri started to enrich our knowledge of the topography of Graeco-Roman Egypt these have been taken into account for our better understanding of both the *Notitia* and the *Itinerarium*, of course. Very informative in this respect are the famous *P. Panop. Beatty* published in 1964.

Thanks especially to these documentary papyri many place names in the *Notitia* have become, notwithstanding their sometimes garbled form, familiar enough to us now, but in a few cases toponyms in the *Notitia* have raised problems and - though identifications have sometimes been proposed - I think that the last word as regards these identifications has not yet been said.

Some names in § 31 are easily recognizable: l. 23, *Lico* = Lycopolis; l. 25, *Tentira* = Tentyra (Dendera); l. 28, *Lato* = Latopolis; l. 32, *Cusas* = Koussai; l. 34, *Apollinopolis superior* = Apollinopolis Ano; l. 37, *Filas* = Philae; l. 39, *Hermunthi* = Hermonthis; l. 43, *Poisarietemos* refers, of course, to the well-known *Speos Artemidos* (Beni Hassan). A more problematical item, however, occurs in line 53 of this paragraph, where one reads:

*Ala octava* ..... , *Abydum* - *Abocedo*.

(Ms 'V': ABECEDO before correction)

In a footnote one finds that E. Böcking suggested<sup>9</sup> correcting this latter name to '*Abotide*' (ablative of a place name '*Abotis*' ), but this correction does not help much to answer the question what the relationship between the preceding name *Abydum* and the following name '*Abocedo*' (or '*Abotide*' ) is. Moreover, as regards this place '*Abotis*' no more is known<sup>10</sup> than that it was the name of a place in Egypt (mentioned by two classical authors, i.e. Hecataeus and Herodian), but it is not known where in Egypt it should be looked for. This is not very illuminating. On the other hand, there is not a single further attestation of the place name '*Abocedo*' in any other (semi)-literary source or in a documentary papyrus, and I have therefore come to think that we are dealing here with a corruption in the manuscript tradition of the *Notitia*. If one supposes that in an early manuscript the letters were written in uncials, an E and a C must have looked quite similar. Furthermore, one may suppose that an I and the vertical hasta of a following D were conflated. These considerations lead me to suppose that the original reading was '*AB OCC<I>D.*', developing into '*ABOCEDO*', and one can understand this as meaning that a military unit, viz. an 8th *ala* of the ... (name lost), was located in a military camp at Abydos, i.e. to the West of it, or - perhaps a bit less attractive - that it was located at Abydos 'on the West bank'.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, this entry is the only one in this part of the *Notitia* presenting such an 'extra' piece of information about the precise location of a military camp either at some point outside of a major town or on the Nile bank; moreover, we do not seem to have any archaeological report of remains of any military camp found to the

<sup>7</sup> I have used the edition by O. Cuntz, *Itineraria Romana*, I (Leipzig 1929), esp. pp. 21-23.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. D. van Berchem, 'L'itinéraire Antonin et le voyage en orient de Caracalla (214-215)', *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres* 1973, pp. 123-126.

<sup>9</sup> In his edition of the *Notitia*, published between 1839-1853.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the entry in A. Calderini, *Dizionario Geografico*, I 1 4 and J. Ball, *Egypt in the Classical Geographers* (Cairo 1942) 167.

<sup>11</sup> The entry in A. Calderini, *Dizionario Geografico*, I 1 4, should be corrected accordingly. As regards the 'mechanics' of the corruption one may compare the critical apparatus of l. 44, where the manuscript 'M' reads 'PESELA', whereas other MSS read 'PESCLA', i.e. here, too, we have confusion of an uncial E and an uncial C. At the same time one should remember that there is a well-known village Pesla in the Hermopolite Nome; for this village cf. M. Drew-Bear, *Le Nome Hermopolite* 204f.

West of Abydos, though this place has been excavated pretty well. Nevertheless, I hope that my endeavour to remove a corrupt name in the *Notitia* is convincing.

One may well ask whether there are more such place names in this paragraph of the *Notitia*, where one can try to improve upon our predecessors and get closer to the original reading. My answer is positive, but before proceeding I should like to say something about the arrangement of the *Notitia* on the basis of those place names which can be identified with certainty (see the map at the end of this article). The list of localities in the Thebaid where *alae* belonging to the *laterculum minus* (l. 42) were stationed - referred to in ll. 43-57 (they are the black circles on the map) - are apparently listed mostly 'clockwise', i.e. their listing starts in the North of the Thebaid on the East bank and goes to the South, crosses the Nile at Syene, and is carried on going downstream on the Left bank until one reaches the North of the Thebaid again. The only element that slightly disturbs this neat scenario comes in l. 57 where the reference to Prektis (supposedly situated on the East bank)<sup>12</sup> entails jumping from the West bank back to the East bank. So, while starting out from the assumption that there originally was some system in the listing of *alae* in the *Notitia*, one has to reckon with an occasional departure from a rigid application of the supposed system. I shall come back to this point later.

A second place name to be discussed here is *Pampane* (l. 52), between Contra-Apollinopolis (l. 51, on the East bank) and Abydos (l. 53, on the West bank). This has been identified by all scholars working in this field with *Papa* on the West bank, situated 8 miles to the South of Contra-Coptos and 30 miles to the North of Hermonthis (cf. *Itinerarium* 159.4). On the map one arrives at the area on the West bank of the Nile opposite Thebes. In fact, in O.Stras. 780 one finds a payment through the '*kollubistike trapeza*' at *Papa* to a praktor of the Memnonia (also on the Left bank of the Nile opposite Thebes); this presupposes that there was a close connection indeed between *Papa* and this part of the Left bank. On the other hand, there is a London papyrus from Syene which mentions a monastery at *Pampane* (P.Lond. V 1724); clearly one is dealing with two *separate* localities, viz. *Papa* and *Pampane*.<sup>13</sup> On the authority of the geographer Ptolemaeus (*Geogr.* IV 5 31) *Pampane* was situated indeed on the West bank of the Nile, somewhere between Tentyra and Hermonthis; maybe one should not be surprised, if at some moment *Pampane* turned out to be the original (Egyptian) name for the place which is called '*Contra-Copto*' in the *Itinerarium* (159.3).

A third rather unfamiliar geographical name in this part of the *Notitia* may be that of *Psinabla* (l. 54) but it is comforting to know that this locality is also mentioned in the P.Panop.Beatty<sup>14</sup> as a fort where a Roman garrison was stationed; the editor of these papyri already made a convincing argument for putting this fort on the Left bank of the Nile opposite modern Akhmim in the Panopolite Nome.<sup>15</sup>

Now we take leave of the section on the *alae* and have a look at the *cohortes* stationed in the Thebaid. Already earlier I mentioned a slight departure from a neat scenario concerning the 'clockwise' listing in the section on the *alae*; the section on the *cohortes* (ll. 58-67) seems to show another case of such a departure. First, let us try to reconstruct such a 'clockwise' listing similar to that of the *alae*. Place names like *Theracon* (l. 58) corrupted from *Hieracon* (Wesseling's correction of the *Notitia*'s manuscript text proposed in his edition of the

<sup>12</sup>Cf. M. Drew-Bear, *Le Nome Hermopolite* 223.

<sup>13</sup>For this question one may now also consult S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, IV 1822-23 s.n. *Pampane*, who makes the same distinction that I do. The *Dizionario Geografico*, IV 33 s.n. *Pampanis*, still identifies *Pampane* with *Papa*.

<sup>14</sup>For references cf. *Dizionario Geografico*, V 162.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, IV 2038-39. It is unclear to me whether one should identify this place with the place *Psinabla* located on the East bank in the plain of el-'Amarna on a map in A. Grohmann, *Studien zur historischen Geographie und Verwaltung des frühmittelalterlichen Ägypten* (Wien 1959) 45.

*Itinerarium* [at p. 167.2] must be accepted), and *Muthis* (l. 59) are found in the same order on the East bank in the *Itinerarium*; I prefer to pass over *Silili* (l. 60) for just a minute, but *Peamu* (l. 61), too, is situated correctly on the East bank, though more to the South (opposite *Abydos*),<sup>16</sup> and even more to the South one finds *Syene* and *Elephantine* (ll. 64-65) on the East bank; the '*Castra Lapidarium*' (l. 66) may be related to the stone quarries near modern Aswan (every tourist is offered a tour to the so-called 'unfinished obelisk'), but the name is so unspecific, that one may perhaps also reckon with a quite different locality.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, it is certain that *Diospolis* (l. 67) was situated far more to the North on the Left bank. But what of places like *Nitnu* and *Burgus Severi* (ll. 62-63), if they should be looked for somewhere between *Peamu* and *Syene*? There are no other attestations of these place names in this region and, though there is a considerable distance between these two places, it would seem to me that the military camps already known between *Peamu* and *Syene* are located at such regular intervals that there is hardly much space and need for two extra camps at this side of the Nile. The *Dizionario Geografico* does not list a separate entry '*Nitnu*', but elsewhere in the same work one finds<sup>18</sup> a suggestion that '*Nitnu*' should be taken as a corruption for '*Nithine*', in the *Itinerarium* (154.2) spelled '*Nitine*', a place situated in the Western Delta between Andropolis and Hermopolis parva. This idea of the *Dizionario* compilers simply cannot stand, as the '*Nitnu*' of the *Notitia* was situated in the Thebaid. Another proposal was made by D. van Berchem,<sup>19</sup> who suggested to identify '*Nitnu*' with Antinoopolis. Such a hypothesis presupposes that one is willing indeed to reckon with some departure from the normal sequence of the listing of cohorts' locations (as Antinoopolis lies to the North of Hierakon, one would expect '*Nitnu*' before l. 58). Now, van Berchem's idea of an interruption in the expected sequence of place names seems acceptable. Moreover, in itself it seems likely enough that at some time in the 4th century there was a military garrison in Antinoopolis (after all, it was the capital of the Thebaid). But even so van Berchem's proposal does not seem fully convincing, as it entails a rather far-going corruption of the well-known place name *ANTINOÖY* (i.e. the complete disappearance/omission of the initial A-, a transposition of the letters -TI- > -IT- and the disappearance of the -O- after the 2nd -N-).

In fact, as far as palaeographical and linguistic considerations are concerned, there is another place name in documentary papyri which may be adduced for an attempt to identify '*Nitnu*', viz. *NETNHOY*. In this connection it should be remembered that in the Greek pronunciation of this period the -ε- and the -ι- are often confused and the -N- preceding the Eta may have caused the loss of that letter (also consisting of two vertical *hastae* with a connecting stroke) in the process of copying the Mss. This village is mentioned in a few Oxyrhynchite papyri,<sup>20</sup> but it may have been situated in the border region between the Oxyrhynchite and Hermopolite Nomes and it may be assumed that at various times it was considered to belong to either nome. If this idea is correct, it would entail that ll. 62-63 would have to be transferred (to in between ll. 67 and 68?) and that '*Nitnu*' would have to be situated to the North of

<sup>16</sup>Cf. P.Beatty Panop. 2.291-92.

<sup>17</sup>E.g. the stone quarries at Akoris on the East bank? But then the line stands out-of-order.

<sup>18</sup>*Dizionario Geografico*, III 355, s.n. 'Nithine'.

<sup>19</sup>*L'armée de Dioclétien et la réforme constantinienne* 67.

<sup>20</sup>For its location somewhere in the Oxyrhynchite nome cf. P. Pruneti, *I centri abitati dell' Ossirinchi*, 119; the attestations listed there date from A.D. 442/3 - 557; cf. BASP 18 [1981] 44-46 where the reference to Netneu given in connection with the Hermopolite nome in P.Laur. III 75 (Oxyrhynchus, A.D. 574), ll. 13-14 is discussed. The Greek text reads:

Νετνη[οὔτος τοῦ Ἑρμου-]  
πολίτου [ ] χ[αίρειν.]

The ending -πολίτου in l. 14 excludes restoring 'Οξυρρυγίτου. J. Gasco, however, suggests to restore Νετνη[οὔτος τοῦ Νέου Ἰουστινο-] πολίτου.



Hermopolis, which was so far the most Northern army camp on the Left bank of the Nile in this paragraph of the *Notitia*.

One more remark on *cohortes* on the Left bank of the Nile in the Thebaid: once a restoration [Contra] Syene (cf. *Itinerarium* 162.2) is accepted in l. 65, where Seeck's edition reads:

'Cohors quinta Suentium, [quinta], Suene'

there will be no question as regards its location, on the Left bank of the Nile opposite Syene.

Now we turn back to *cohortes* on the East bank of the Nile. There are, again, a few names which deserve our further attention. Problematical is *Silili* (l. 60). In Seeck's *Notitia* edition one finds his assumption that this place name is identical with *Selinum*, a place situated according the *Itinerarium* (166.4) on the East bank at a distance of 16 miles to the North of Panopolis. Though I have tried to demonstrate that text corruptions in the manuscripts of the *Notitia* do occur, it is still not very easy (at least not for me) to make the jump from 'SELINO' (*Itinerarium*) to 'SILILI' (*Notitia*) and one might feel attracted to accept as yet the idea of d'Anville to read SIL<S>ILI (cf. Seeck's *app.crit.* ad loc.), though this would entail another interruption of the regular geographical sequence (for this very reason the idea was rejected by Seeck); the stone quarries at Silile are located some 15 miles to the North of Omboi, and they should come, then, after Peamu in l. 61. Now, I have tried to demonstrate already that in ll. 59-67 there may be disturbances in the order of the various cohort camps listed (cf. the case of 'Nitnu/Netneu') and as a consequence one does not need to follow Seeck's line of thought. On the other hand, it should be remarked in favour of an identification *Silili* '=' *Selino* that one almost expects a camp somewhere between Muthis (to the North of Antaiopolis) and Thmou (slightly to the South of Panopolis), as the distance between these places, according to the *Itinerarium* 44 miles, almost calls for a military camp located in between these two camps (cf. below); on balance, therefore, that identification may have to be retained<sup>21</sup>

Secondly there is the '*Burgus Severi*' (l. 63). Again, other sources do not indicate where this locality should be looked for, and I can only point to two toponyms in the Oxyrhynchite Nome, Πύργου and Σεούρου ἐποίκιον.<sup>22</sup> If these were in fact referring to the same village and if that village could be situated in the border region between the Hermopolite and the Oxyrhynchite Nome (cf. the case of the village of 'Nitnu/Netneu' discussed above),<sup>23</sup> there would be no further problem; the Latin word '*burgus*' seems to denote much the same as the Greek 'ἐποίκιον'. In terms of a geographical distribution of troops over the area it would be most fitting, if this camp at '*Burgus Severi*' were situated on the East bank of the Nile (closing off the 'clockwise' listing which started on the East bank; cf. the situation with the *alae* ll. 43-57), but with so many hypotheses piled on top of each other one cannot be certain.

The map listing the distribution of the army units in the Thebaid shows clearly how the defense forces were distributed. At a glance it becomes apparent that the Egyptian limes-system was based upon a distribution of forces on both sides of the Nile with rather regular intervals between the various posts and fortifications often being located opposite each other. Syene corresponds, of course, with Contra-Syene, Apollinopolis with Contra-Apollinopolis,

<sup>21</sup>I have wondered whether there is an alternative for d'Anville's suggestion in the following hypothesis, viz. an identification of this name of *Silili* with the Hermopolitan village of *Selilais*, located to the North-East of Hermopolis (cf. M. Drew-Bear, *Le Nome Hermopolite*, 236ff.). Though nothing about a military camp in this village is known to date, I may point out that in this region there seem to be other camps not known so far, cf. the case of the village of *Adelphiou* and the new reading proposed by J. Gascou for a 4th century papyrus (SB XVI 12825 ii.15), where the *ed.princ.* reads 'Ἀντισὶ πραιπ(οσίτῳ) εἰκ(όντος) Ἀδελφίου; Gascou proposes to read εἴ(λη)ς Ἀδελφίου while admitting that nothing is known of an *ala* located at *Adelphiou*. The principal argument against this speculation can be found in the fact that *Selilais* seems to be situated on the West bank of the Nile, rather than, as expected, on the East bank.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. P. Pruneti, *I Centri abitati*, 158, 175.

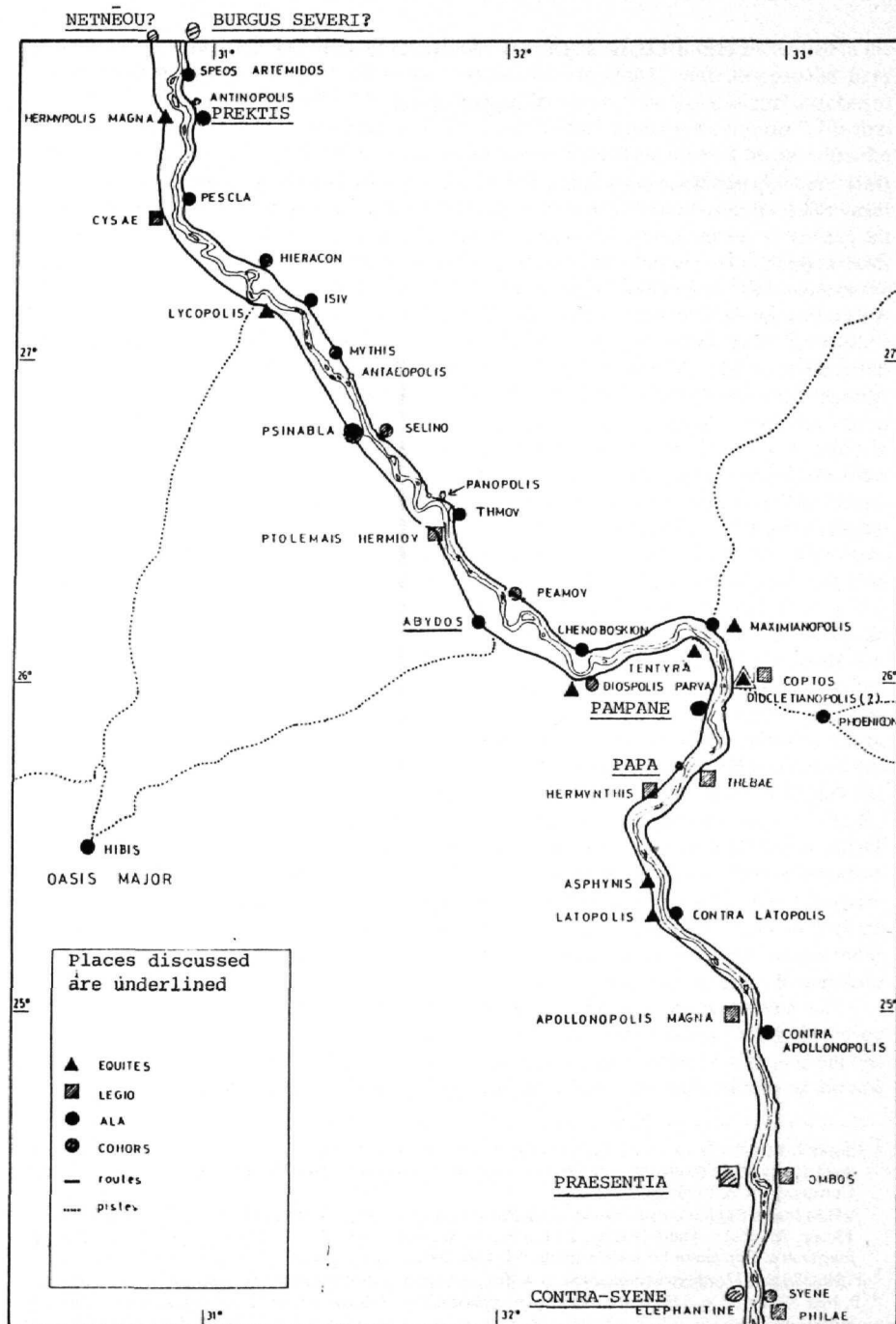
<sup>23</sup>Their precise location is at present not yet known.

Latopolis with Contra-Latopolis, Hermonthis with Thebes, Tentyra with Maximianopolis, Diospolis Parva with Chenoboskion, Abydos with Peamu, Psinabla with Thmou, Lycopolis with Isiu and Hierakon, Cussae with Pesla, and Hermopolis with Prektis. At the same time it becomes apparent why it is probably correct to locate the camp of *Praesentia* (l. 33) opposite Omboi, i.e. because of the large gap in the defense line which would arise otherwise.<sup>24</sup> I should be inclined to put Pampane to the North of its supposed 'alter ego', Papa, opposite Koptos/Diocletianopolis. Finally, Nitnu/Netneu and the Burgus Severi may mutually correspond and supplement each other at the Northernmost border of the Thebaid in order to close off the South-bound ways into the interior of Southern Egypt.

On the West bank the average distance between each military camp in the Thebaid is 25.5 miles. The largest distance between two adjacent camps, viz. that between *Praesentia* (IF that is to be identified with Contra-Omboi) and Syene, counts about 43 miles, while the next largest distance, viz. that between Cussae and Lycopolis, counts about 35 miles. Likewise, on the East bank the largest distance between two adjacent camps is about 44 miles (between Koptos and Thebes), while the average distance between camps is about 27 miles.

<sup>24</sup>This camp at *Praesentia* (cf. U. Wilcken, *Archiv* 7 [1924] 105 on SPP XX 83 iii.4 [cf. Verso ii.6,11]: "Wahrscheinlich lag *Praesentia* neben Omboi") may be identical with a place name *Persentia* occurring in SPP X 198.5, where a ship is being attributed to a certain Theodorus 'from *Persentia*'. The editor of the *Dizionario Geografico* (IV 107 s.n. *Persentia*) states that the place may belong to the Hermopolitan nome, but I wonder what the basis for this attribution is, as there are no other Hermopolitan place names mentioned in this papyrus. For the bishopric of ΠΕΡΣΕΝΤΙΑ in Coptic sources cf. S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, IV 1902. To be sure, I do not think that the identification of *Praesentia* with the Roman camp at Nag el-Hagar (on this cf. P. Zignani's paper given at the 1991 Congrès d'Égyptologie de Torino [I owe this reference to the kindness of B. Meyer, Paris]) is assured.

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Oxy., vgl.  
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FROM: Roman Frontier Studies 1967 (Tell Aviv University 1971) 125  
[D. van Berchem]