Egyptian Units and the reliability of the *Notitia dignitatum, pars Oriens*

Version 01
April 2014

Anna Maria Kaiser (University of Vienna, Department of Ancient History, Papyrology and Epigraphy)

Abstract: This study argues for the reliability of the Egyptian military lists in the *pars Oriens* of the *Notitia Dignitatum* and opposes the views of some scholars, who see the *Not.Dig.* as a purely ideological composition unrelated to historical reality and without value as an historical source. Deniers of the *Not.Dig.*’s reliability generally ignore the documentary evidence. For Egypt, papyrological documentation verifies the *Not.Dig.*’s accuracy—a circumstance not so readily available for other parts of the Roman Empire—and, complemented by archaeological evidence, provides a strong argument for the completeness and reliability of at least the Egyptian sections. Thus the probability of the *Not.Dig.*’s accuracy for other sections of the *pars Oriens* is also corroborated.

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anna.maria.kaiser@univie.ac.at
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The *Notitia Dignitatum*, a Late Roman, illustrated list describing the administrative hierarchy of the civil and military branches of both the East and the West Roman Empires, has been esteemed since the nineteenth century as a basic source for Late Antique bureaucracy. Recently, however, the *Not.Dig.*’s reliability has been questioned and in some circles it is no longer accepted as a reliable source.¹ Three issues have emerged: the date of compilation and the possibility of several redactions, the document’s purpose, and its reliability. This paper will address the contention of its reliability.

Most scholars take the extant *Not.Dig.* as a practical handbook of the Late Roman bureaucracy and suppose that the document preserved in the *Codex Spirensis* must have

belonged to a high official, given its elaborate presentation and decoration.² Others challenge this view, rejecting the Notitia’s practical use and its accuracy.³ If the compilers’ intention was an ideological glorification of the empire or a (unrealistic) textbook for a young emperor, then the Notitia’s credibility cannot be taken seriously. But even if the Notitia were an ideological document, this does not necessarily mean that the information is not credible.⁴ Indeed, if the pars Oriens does originate from a specific moment, then it could convey a factual state of affairs rather than something entirely fictional—and Michael Kulikowski is inclined to see the pars Oriens as exactly that: a list giving a fair picture of administrative and military dispositions in the Eastern Empire. He nevertheless states that whether the Notitia served an ideological purpose in the East or reflected reality (especially in the pars Oriens) cannot be determined.⁵ Most scholars agree that the pars Oriens, a largely coherent document, contrasts with the pars Occidens’ repeated updates and redactions. The pars Oriens thus seems much more reliable.⁶

Testing the factual accuracy of at least the pars Oriens has never been done through a proper comparison of the military lists for a specific area or province with other sources for the same region. Egypt with its lavish papyrological documentation offers the optimal test case, as many parts of the Eastern Empire lack sufficient sources to verify army units. After establishing the date of the Egyptian sections of the pars Oriens, we will explore the argument for the Not.Dig.’s completeness and its credibility. As long known, the pars Oriens shows no military units post-dating Theodosius I (or the early years of his sons), and contrary to the pars Occidens, it concerns one point in time, not different chronological layers like the

³ Purpura 1992: 469–84 (gift of Theodosius II to young Valentinian III); Scharf (2005: 315) argues, however, that this setting does not work for Purpura’s proposed date of the Not.Dig.’s composition. Brennan 1996: 164 (ideological ‘dream-world’); Kulikowski (2000: 359) follows the ideological approach, but detects some problems; Scharf (2005: 3 n. 3) catalogues the bibliography on the Notitia Dignitatum as a purely ideological ‘dream-world’; Clemente (2010: 120; 130) states that the Notitia clearly is no working document a military commander might use daily, but does not necessarily see the Notitia drafted for a special occasion only.
⁴ Kulikowski 2000: 360.
⁵ Kulikowski 2000: 360–73.
western part, in which updates for a few decades occur. The latest units in the *pars Oriens* (this article’s focus) are named after Theodosius I and his sons Honorius and Arcadius; thus a date shortly before or after the death of Theodosius I in 395 is (since Arnold H.M. Jones) the *communis opinio*, which Dietrich Hoffmann followed in the last major study of the *Notitia*. Recently, Kulikowski argued for approximately the same date, 394; Theodosius I would have brought the *pars Oriens* with him on his campaign against Eugenius: thus a *terminus post quem* of 386, since at some time after February 386 the Egyptian province Arcadia, present in the *Notitia*, was constituted, and a *terminus ante quem* of May 394, the start of the campaign against Eugenius. But the *Notitia* clearly reflects an empire divided only after Theodosius’ death in January 395; and Bernhard Palme has now dated the constitution of the province of Arcadia to not long before the year 398. Thus Kulikowski’s *terminus post quem* must be shifted to a much later date and actually later than his *terminus ante quem*. More importantly, the new dating of the province Arcadia fits perfectly with the arguments of Constantin Zuckerman and Tassilo Schmitt, the first not taken into account by Kulikowski and the second appearing a year after Kulikowski’s discussion. Zuckerman puts the *pars Oriens* in 399 or perhaps 401 or even slightly later, as the promotion of the *praefectus Augustalis* to the rank of *vir spectabilis* in 398–399 indicates; the *Not.Dig.* already lists this official as *vir spectabilis*. Zuckerman favours 401 as the date of transfer to the west, the year of the reconciliation of the emperors Honorius and Arcadius. Schmitt favours 405, when it seems that the *dux Libyarum* was created and the provinces of Libya were separated from Egypt, a status the *Not.Dig.* reflects. At present the Egyptian documentary evidence cannot further pinpoint the *Notitia*’s date, but for this paper’s purpose it is not necessary to decide between Zuckerman’s and Schmitt’s dates, since the time span 398–405 is not great, and irrelevant to an argument on reliability. A rough dating c.400 (e.g., 398–405) suffices.

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11 Zuckerman 1998: 137–47, challenging Clemente’s date of 401–409 for the *pars Oriens*: Clemente (1968: 179–82; holding on to the date in 2010: 125) cites laws effective only in the Western Empire to argue for the date of the *Notitia*’s *pars Oriens*. For dates provided in older scholarly literature, see Purpura (1992: 469–84), who opts for 406–408.
13 Zuckerman’s date for the *Not.Dig.* has received general acceptance: see, e.g., Scharf 2005: 3–4; Millar 2006: 5–6; 45; Pottier 2006: 233; Wheeler 2012: 621 n. 1.
To assess the credibility of the *pars Oriens*, we can compare the units listed under the commands of the *comes limitis Aegypti* and the *dux Thebaidis* with the army units known from the papyri. If the papyri of c.400 show Egyptian units not in the *Notitia*, then the *Notitia* is not complete. Moreover, if some army units appear at the ‘wrong place’ (i.e., the papyri locate them at a different base than that in the *Notitia*), then the reliability of the Egyptian military lists and the whole *pars Oriens* of the *Not.Dig.* can be challenged. On the contrary, if the military organisation c.400 documented in the papyri is correctly reported in the *Not.Dig.*, at least the lists for Egypt provide the actual state of affairs (not an ideological fiction) and thus a strong argument for the accuracy of probably the whole *pars Oriens*.

Nevertheless, three points must be kept in mind when comparing the Egyptian military lists to the papyri. First, the two military lists for Egypt explicitly mention only the units under the command of the *comes limitis Aegypti* and the *dux Thebaidis*.\(^\text{14}\) Units of (pseudo)comitatenses or palatini do not appear in the Egyptian lists, since they are listed in the *Not.Dig.* under the command of one of the *magistri militum*.\(^\text{15}\) Such units could be temporarily stationed in Egypt when not on campaign and only in 492 did Anastasius put them under the authority of local commanders.\(^\text{16}\) If, therefore, a unit appears in the papyri and is not listed under the *comes limitis Aegypti* or the *dux Thebaidis*, the *Not.Dig.* is not necessarily incorrect. That unit could belong to the command of a *magister militum*.\(^\text{17}\) The chance of finding a (pseudo)comitatensis or palatine unit in the papyri is actually not very high, since those units would probably be stationed on the Mediterranean coast to facilitate movement in time of need, and the humidity in the Nile Delta (including Alexandria) does not favour conservation of papyri. One such case might be the numerus Transtigritanorum, a *legio pseudocomitatensis* listed in the *Notitia* under the command of the *magister militum per

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\(^{14}\) *Not.Dig. Or.* XXVIII, 13 (sub dispositione viri spectabilis comitis rei militaris per Aegyptum); XXXI, 22 (sub dispositione viri spectabilis ducis Thebaidos).

\(^{15}\) *Magister militum praesentalis Orientis I*: *Not.Dig.* Or. V; *magister militum praesentalis Orientis II*: *Not.Dig.* Or. VI; *magister militum per Orientem*: *Not.Dig.* Or. VII; *magister militum per Thracum*: *Not.Dig.* Or. VIII; *magister militum per Illyricum*: *Not.Dig.* Or. IX.


\(^{17}\) Units can be identified by their names, very accurately recorded in the *Not.Dig.* as well as in the papyri. If the name of the unit is missing (e.g., due to fragmentary condition of the papyrus), the ranks of the soldiers may give at least a certain indication to the classification of a unit; a *biarchus*, a *centenarius* or a *primicerius*, for example, prove a unit’s classification as *vexillatio* (Palme 2004a: 322.)
It made its first papyrological appearance in 406, but Palme argues convincingly for a very recent deployment to Egypt. Second, soldiers, and even units, travelling through Egypt may appear in the papyri without permanent postings there, and thus are not listed as Egyptian units. Although Late Roman military campaigns are rare in Egypt—the best known is Diocletian’s in 298—travelling officers are frequently found in the papyri. Two mansio-accounts (fourth century) attest the passage of officers and soldiers. These texts list the travellers’ names, ranks or titles, their destination, their entourage, and the number of animals that frequented the mansio of Takona in the Oxyrhynchites for a few months. One of the travelling parties came from Chalcedon, another one from Antioch. Most of the travelling parties belonged to the Roman army and included an entourage: comites (not necessarily used in a technical military sense), tribuni, palatini, praepositi, and scutarii. Examples of itinerant soldiers and officers not so clearly marked as such also appear in the papyri.

Third, detachments and small outposts, a well-known aspect of the disposition of troops in Egypt during both the Principate and Late Antiquity, do not fit the concerns of the Not.Dig., which lists the garrisons and headquarters of whole units, even if units were divided into smaller parts at some point. The evidence for small outposts often does not name the.
unit, to which they belonged. Indeed, the scattered postings of small groups of soldiers from unknown units cannot be used to doubt the Not.Dig.’s credibility. These points will be treated in detail later.

With these preliminary caveats in mind, the first point to be argued is whether the Egyptian military lists are complete. The crucial question is whether any military unit mentioned in the papyri does not appear in the Notitia’s Egyptian registers; do papyri report any units present in Egypt c.400, not in the Not.Dig. and not under the command of a magister militum. The answer is negative: there are no such units c.400. If papyri do indeed attest units stationed in Egypt and not listed in the Notitia, such units do not appear anywhere near the date of the compilation of the pars Oriens c.400. Rather, they were in Egypt either long before the time of the Notitia, or they arrived in Egypt just after the composition of the pars Oriens, the closest example being the Transtigritani mentioned above. They cannot, therefore, support an argument against the Notitia’s accuracy. A list of such units dating to the period before the Notitia’s compilation includes: the Salarati Peregrini,25 equites Marcomanni,26 ali I Thracum,27 legiones IV Flavia Sarmata, VII Claudia and XI Claudia,28 equites Dalmatae,29 ali nova Maximina,30 legiones III Gallica et I Illyricorum,31 vexillatio Parthusagittariorum32 and legio VI Ferrata.33 The units dating after the years c.400 are those stationed in Tentyra (Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 25), Koptos (Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 26), Diospolis Parva (Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 27), Latopolis (Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 28) and Maximianopolis (Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 29). Since Thebes is known to both the Not.Dig. and the contemporary papyri as ‘Thebes’, Diospolis has to be expanded to Diospolis Parva (Kaiser 2012: 606).

25 Latest attestation: P.Oxy. XLI 2951 = Ch.L.A. XLVII 1415 with BL IX, 198 (Oxyrhynchos, 267).
26 Latest attestation: BGU XI 2074 R (Hermopolites, 286–287); for the date see Mitthof 2001: n. 60, 383–6, with BL XII, 23–4.
27 Latest attestation: CIL III Supp.2 13578 (Sile, 288).
28 Latest attestation: P.Oxy. I 43 R = P.Lond. III 748 descr. (Oxyrhynchos, 295); for the date see Mitthof 2001: 390.
29 Latest attestation: P.Oxy. XII 1513 with BL IX, 186 (Oxyrhynchites, 3rd–4th cc.).
30 Latest attestation: SB XII 15480 (Abu Sha’ar, 4th c.).
31 Latest attestation: SEG XXXIV 1598 = SB I 4223 with BL XII, 178 (Syene?, 323). Admittedly it is also possible that, if the inscription was carried off from Koptos to Syene, the unit would have been stationed at Koptos (Scharf 1997: esp. 346 n. 15; Palme 2002: 96 n. 27; SEG XXXIV 1598).
of the Transtigritani,\textsuperscript{34} felices Theodosiaci Isauri,\textsuperscript{35} Leontoclibanarii,\textsuperscript{36} Daci,\textsuperscript{37} Sextodalmati,\textsuperscript{38} Pharanitae,\textsuperscript{39} Bis Electi Iustiniani,\textsuperscript{40} Numidae Iustiniani,\textsuperscript{41} Scythae Iustiniani,\textsuperscript{42} and Salonitae.\textsuperscript{43} Since the units are all too early or slightly too late for the Not.Dig. (at least from the papyrological \textit{status quo}), it does not matter, if these units were (pseudo)\textit{comitatenses} or \textit{palatini}, which therefore would not be included in the Egyptian lists under local commanders.\textsuperscript{44}

Thus so far, no papyri and inscriptions from the time of the \textit{pars Oriens}’ redaction show units that are not listed in the Notitia’s two Egyptian lists. This does not necessarily imply that the Egyptian military lists are complete, but it indicates that the two registers cannot be proved faulty: papyri and inscriptions confirm the Not.Dig.’s information. No errors can be detected.

The second point, the Not.Dig. ’s reliability, is more complicated. A crucial question is whether the units mentioned in the papyri really were stationed where the Notitia places them. Further, what percentages of the units in the two Egyptian lists actually appear in the papyri? We begin with the second question, fully aware that the percentages can only serve as rough guidelines, since new papyri might (and will) change them.

\textsuperscript{34} Earliest attestation: \textit{SB} XIV 11574 (Oxyrhynchos?, 406).
\textsuperscript{35} Kyr. Scyth., \textit{Vita S. Sabae} I 87,6–16 (444); for the date see Palme 2004c: 157–73. The felices Theodosiaci Isauri is a rare case of a unit under a \textit{magister militum} found in the papyri (\textit{Not.Dig. Or.} V, 66).
\textsuperscript{36} Earliest attestation: \textit{P.Würzb.} 17 (Arsinoiton Polis, 454).
\textsuperscript{37} Earliest attestation: Joh. Ruf. \textit{Plerophoriae} XXVII 1–2 (referring to years 474–475); \textit{P.Vindob.} G 30121 (Heracleopolis?, end 5th c./early 6th c.; see Mitthof 2001: 561 n. 194 A; Kaiser in prep.).
\textsuperscript{38} Earliest attestation: \textit{P.Vindob.} G 30121 (Heracleopolis?, end 5th c./early 6th c.; see Mitthof 2001: 561 n. 194 A; Kaiser in prep.).
\textsuperscript{39} Earliest attestation: \textit{P.Oxy.} LXVIII 4700 (Oxyrhynchos, 504).
\textsuperscript{40} Earliest attestation: \textit{SB} XX 14494 = \textit{P.Freer} 3 + 4 (Aphrodites Kome, 533/534–542/543 or 546–548); for the dates see Gascou 1989: 284; Zuckerman 2004b: 54–6.
\textsuperscript{41} Earliest attestation: \textit{BGU} XII 2197 with \textit{BL} X, 24 (Hermoupolis, later than 537–538); \textit{P.Cair.Masp.} II 67141 (Aphrodites Kome, c.537–551 or before 547/548); for dates see Mitthof 2008: 249 n. 7; Fournet 2008: 318.
\textsuperscript{43} Earliest attestation: \textit{PSI} III 247 (Oxyrhynchos, 6th c.).
\textsuperscript{44} The Notitia classifies the Transtigritani as \textit{legio pseudocomitatensis} under the \textit{magister militum per Orientem}, the felices Theodosiaci Isauri as \textit{auxilium palatinum} under the \textit{magister militum praesentalis Orientis I}, the Daci as \textit{legio palatina} and the Sextodalmati as \textit{vexillatio comitatensis}, both under the command of the \textit{magister militum praesentalis Orientis II} (Not.Dig. Or. VII, 85; V, 66; VI, 3 = 43; 37).
Chart 1: Military units in *Not.Dig. Or. XVIII* and XXXI.

The *Not.Dig.* lists sixty-five units under the *comes limitis Aegypti* and the *dux Thebaidis*. For our purposes, units named twice or even thrice (i.e., having more than one posting) are counted as single units (that is only once).\(^45\) The papyri attest thirty-two of these sixty-five units, 49.23% (see chart 1), although at this point we have not yet distinguished units attested in the papyri by name and station from units known only by station or name. The 49.23% (less than half) may not initially seem impressive, but the papyrological documentation is geographically very selective. Not every region in Egypt is likely to preserve papyri, and key areas like the Delta and Alexandria are (as mentioned) hardly documented at all. Given the factor of selective preservation, the percentages should not be taken as an absolute value, but rather as a general indication. Nevertheless, we will subsequently use the percentages in order to give concrete numbers rather than vague approximations.

\(^{45}\) For units stationed at multiple sites in the *Notitia*, see above n. 24.
Chart 2: Military units attested in Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, XXXI and papyri.

The thirty-two papyrologically attested units (see chart 2) must now be addressed. Three units cannot be identified with certainty and their stations are not named: one papyrus mentions Alamanni and Palmyreni without further clarification of their identity or function, although they are possibly related to the cohors IX Alamannorum and the ala VIII Palmyrenorum.47 Another papyrus mentions Franci.48 They might belong to either the ala I Francorum or the cohors VII Francorum.49 Since it is highly unlikely that the Franci belonged to both units, one of them (the ala or the cohors) is not mentioned in the papyri.

Four units named in the papyri lack a station: cohors I Apamenorum,50 ala Arcadiana,51 ala I Augusta Pannoniorum,52 and ala II Hispanorum.53 The ala Arcadiana also lacks a station in the Notitia, where the ala is listed as nuper constituta under the comes limitis Aegypti.54 Since the papyrus mentioning the ala (actually the φαμιλία Ἀρκαδιανῶν) also refers to the legio V Macedonica (φαμιλία πέμπτης Μακεδονικῆς) at Memphis under the comes

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46 O.Mich. I 662 (Karanis, 3rd–4th cc.).
47 Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 63 (Burgus Severi); 49 (Phoinikon).
48 SB XXIV 16188 (Hermoupolis, second half 6th c.).
49 Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 51 (Contra Apollonopolis); 67 (Diospolis Parva); Bagnall and Palme 1996: 6–7.
50 P.Panop.Beatty 1 (Panopolis, 298).
51 P.Strasb. VIII 717 with BL IX, 330 (unknown, 5th c.).
52 The latest papyrus mentioning the ala I Augusta Pannoniorum dates to the second half of the third century: P.Oxy. XLI 2951 = Ch.L.A. XLVII 1415 (Oxyrhynchos, 267).
53 P.Oxy. I 43 R = P.Lond. III 748 descr. (Oxyrhynchos, 295); for the date see Mitthof 2001: 390.
54 Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 21.
limits Aegypti, it is likely that the ala still stood somewhere in northern Egypt, where the Not.Dig. lists it, but little papyrological evidence is preserved.  

Twelve units attested by name and station in the papyri (the only twelve for which papyri give both types of information) are located exactly where they should be according to the Not.Dig.: the legio V Macedonica at Memphis,56 ala V Praelectorum at Dionysias,57 ala III Assyriorum at Psobthis,58 equites Mauri scutarii (both Hermoupolis Magna and Lycopolis are attested),59 ala II Herculia Dromedariorum at Toeto-Psinabla,60 ala I Hiberorum at Thmou,61 cohorts XI Chamavorum at Peamu,62 legio III Diocletiana at Andropolis, Ombos, Praesentia, and Thebes (the station Thebes is attested),63 legio II Traiana at Paremboile (Nicopolis) and

55 Legio V Macedonica at Memphis: Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 14.
56 Ch.L.A. XIX 684 II. 1–16 (= P.Strasb. VII 617 with BL XII, 51; Arsinoites, 303–304) proves its presence in Memphis, whereas P.Gen. I 70 (= W.Chr. 380 with BL VIII, 135; Philadelphia, Arsinoites, 372) only mentions the legio V Macedonica; SB XXII 15801 (Arsinoites, 419) attests the legion at Memphis, but P.Cair.Masp. 1 67005 with BL XI, 52 Antinoopolis?, 567–568; for the date see Fournet 2008: 313) shows (a part of) the legion at Antaiopolis.
57 Military presence in Dionysias is first attested at the beginning of the fourth century: O.Fay. 21 (Euhemeria, Arsinoites, 306); the ala V Praelectorum as the unit under the praefectus Flavius Abinaeus figures in papyri from the 340s to the 350s (P.Abinn. 1 = P.Lond. II 447 R descr.; Ch.L.A. III 202 = C.Pap.Lat. 265 = C.Epist.Lat. I 226 [Philadelphia?, Arsinoites, 340–342]; P.Abinn. 55 = P.Lond. II 412, p. 279 [Berenikis Aigialou, Arsinoites, 351]); the last papyrus showing military presence at Dionysias dates 362 (SB XXII 15286 = P.Flor. I 30, Arsinoites, 362). The Notitia therefore is its latest attestation at Dionysias.
58 SB XX 14300 = PSI IV 300 with BL X, 227 (Oxyrhynchites, 324); P.Oxy. XVI 1883 (Oxyrhynchos, 504) still proves its presence at Psobthis. The Notitia actually gives an ala II Assyriorum in Psobthis and does not know a III Assyriorum in Egypt at all. This was already recognised as a simple scribal error, stemming from a version of the Notitia, in which the Roman numerals were not written as words, see Rea, P.Oxy. LV 3793 n. 1; Zuckerman 1994: esp. 199–200; Daris: 2004: esp. 238; 245.
59 Hermoupolis Magna: P.Charite 6 (Hermoupolis, 347–348); SB XVI 12488 = P.Lond. III 999 descr., p. LI + 999, p. 270 (Hermoupolites, 538); by 538 the Mauri were no longer at Hermoupolis, but are specified as having been stationed in Hermoupolis earlier: Φλαυίῳ Σιλβανῷ Φοιβά µµ ωνος ἀπὸ στρατιωτῶν τοῦ πρότερον ἐν Ἑρµοῦ πόλει ἄρτιμοι τῶν Μαύρων (ll. 4–5).
Lycopolis: P.Oxy. LXXII 4893 (Oxyrhynchites?, 375); SB XXVI 16532 (Lycopolis, 535) is the latest attestation for the Mauri in Lycopolis.
60 P.Panop.Beatty 1 (Panopolis, 298); 2 (Panopolis, 300).
61 P.Panop.Beatty 1 (Panopolis, 298); 2 (Panopolis, 300); P.Oxy. XLI 2953 = Ch.L.A. XLVII 1417 (Oxyrhynchos, 293–305).
63 SB XXIV 16333 (Hermoupolis, 338); P.Brook. 10 = SB VI 9566 (Thebes, 6th c.) mentions the numeros in Thebes (ἀριθµὸς Θῆβῶν), whereas the earlier SB XVIII 13321 (Thebes, 5th–6th cc.) refers to the legion in Thebes (λεγεών Θῆβων).

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Apollonopolis Magna (placement at Apollonopolis Magna is proved),\textsuperscript{64} ala I Abasgorum at Hibis,\textsuperscript{65} and ala I Quadorum at Trimuthis.\textsuperscript{66} The \textit{Notitia} cites garrisons of the \textit{equites sagittarii indigeneae} at Tentyra, Koptos, Diospolis Parva, Latopolis and Maximianopolis.\textsuperscript{67} The one explicit papyrological reference to the \textit{equites sagittarii indigeneae} has it at Potekoptos, commonly believed to be identical with Koptos.\textsuperscript{68} Of thirty-two units, twelve or 37.5\%, have their papyrological attestations coincide with their location in the \textit{Not.Dig}. Essentially all units papyrologically attested with both name and station are located at exactly where the \textit{Not.Dig.} indicates. There is not a single case of discrepancy. Further analysis of those twelve units, counting all multiple stations of a single unit in the \textit{Notitia} as one (and not every unit, no matter how many stations the \textit{Notitia} lists), yields twelve garrison places out of forty-two stations or, a total of 28.57\%—a higher percentage than it might initially seem, given the factor of the selective papyrological survival. Indeed these twelve units attested by both name and station are unique—the only ones with both name and location.

As all twelve units mentioned by name and station in the papyri coincide with data from the \textit{Not.Dig.} it becomes likely that the twelve units mentioned in the papyri only by station (but not by name), are also to be identified with the units the \textit{Notitia} records for the relevant station. In the fourth century—(and even more so in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries), units tend to be cited by the name of their posting locale and not their official unit name.\textsuperscript{70} Three of these units cited by place names are characterised as legions. In these cases

\textsuperscript{64} A papyrus reference to Parembole in the Nile Delta is quite unlikely due to the climatic conditions. Apollonopolis Magna: \textit{P.Panop.Beatty} 2 (Panopolis, 300); papyri and ostraca from the fourth century attest a legion at Apollonopolis, most likely the II Traiana: \textit{SB} XX 14812 (Munesis, Oasis Maior, 4\textsuperscript{th} c.).

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{SB} XVIII 13852 (Hibis, Oasis Maior, 309) mentions the ala in the Hibites nome; \textit{O.Waqfa} 30 (Ain Waqfa, Oasis Maior, second half 4\textsuperscript{th} c.).

\textsuperscript{66} CPR VII 21 with \textit{BL} VIII, 109 = \textit{Ch.L.A.} XLV 1335 (unknown, 300–305/306).

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Not.Dig. Or.} XXXI, 25–29; \textit{P.Panop.Beatty} 2 (Panopolis, 300). A cavalry \textit{vexillatio} in Latopolis may also be identified with the \textit{equites sagittarii indigeneae}, resulting in an even better percentage: \textit{P.Jena} II 4 (Hermoupolis or Antinoopolis?, 396). For this \textit{vexillatio} and the equation see Ast at \textit{P.Jena} II 4.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{P.Panop.Beatty} 2 is hitherto the only papyrus mentioning Potekoptos. Skeat (\textit{P.Panop.Beatty}: 145 n. 162), identifies Potekoptos with the former Koptos and derives the name from η ποτὲ Κόπτος: Koptos, center of a revolt suppressed in the late third century and destroyed, would have been referred to as Potekoptos, only to become known as Koptos again later. Skeat’s explanation is generally accepted: see Van Berchem 1971: esp. 126; Bowman 1978: esp. 27 n. 13; Rea, \textit{P.Oxy.} XXXIII 2673 at n. l. 9; Leadbetter 2013: 84.

\textsuperscript{69} For the units in the \textit{Not.Dig.} at more than one station, see above n. 24.

\textsuperscript{70} To list just a few examples of different units and their stations: Legio III Diocletiana/Thbes: \textit{SB} XVIII 13321,1–2 (Thbes, 5\textsuperscript{th}–6\textsuperscript{th} cc.): κεντυρ(ίων) | λεγ(εώνος) Ὀνθβων; \textit{P.Brook}. 10,14 = \textit{SB} VI 9566 (Thbes, 6\textsuperscript{th} c.): κεντυρ(ίων) ἄρθροι Ὀνθβων; legio V Macedonica/Memphis: \textit{SB} XXII 15801,6 (Arsinoites, 419): [Φλ(αούιον)]
it is extremely likely that they are to be identified with the legions the Notitia mentions for these locales: the legio I Maximiana stationed in Philae,\textsuperscript{71} the milites miliarenses in Syene (listed amongst the legions in the Not.Dig.),\textsuperscript{72} and the legio II Valentiniana in Hermonthis.\textsuperscript{73} The other nine units identified by their stations are: ala I Herculia (Scenae extra Geras),\textsuperscript{74} ala III Arabum (Terenuthis),\textsuperscript{75} legio XIII Gemina (Babylon),\textsuperscript{76} ala VII Sarmatarum (Scenae Mandrae),\textsuperscript{77} cohors IV Numidaria (Narmuthis, in which’ castrum a papyrus mentioning the tribunos of the castrum Narmuthis was found, which backs up the identification),\textsuperscript{78} ala I

\textsuperscript{71} To give but one example: Φλ(άουος) Μαρτυρίῳ Οὐαλεντῖνος στρ(ατιώτης) λεγ(εώνος) Φλάου (P.Münch. I 16,44 = FIRA III 107 with BL VIII, 227, Syene, late 5\textsuperscript{th} c.); Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 37. Although the papyri mentioning the legion date from the late fifth century onwards (the time the Patermouthis-archive covers), evidence for the Roman army in Philae dates much earlier. The legion in Philae is first mentioned in P.Münch. I 16 = FIRA III 107 with BL VIII, 227 (Syene, end of 5\textsuperscript{th} c.). The Roman fort was actually not on the small island of Isis but on the east bank of the Nile, where a footpath coming from Syene and skirting the First Cataract ended or started respectively. (Speidel 1992: esp. 246; 270. For the likely equation see Jones 1964: II 654–5; Keenan 1990: esp. 141–2.

\textsuperscript{72} To give but one example: Οὐαλεντῖος στρ(ατιώτης) λεγ(εώνος) Συήνης (P.Münch. I 15 + P.Lond. V 1855,23 with BL I, 311; VI, 90, Syene, 493); Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 35. Once again it is the Patermouthis-archive which gives the data for the legion in Syene, see above n. 71.

\textsuperscript{73} Εὐδόξιος στρ(ατιώτης) λεγ(εώνος) Ἐρμούονθως (SB XX 14799,3, Munesis, Oasis Majur, 4\textsuperscript{th} c.); Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 39. The latest papyri mentioning probably this unit in Hermonthis dates to the sixth century: BGU II 673 with BL I, 60; VII, 14 (Hermonthis, 525).

\textsuperscript{74} Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 29; P.Oxy. L 3580 (Oxyrhynchinos, 4\textsuperscript{th} c.).

\textsuperscript{75} Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 24; P.Köln V 232 with BL IX, 114 (Terenuthis, 330 or 337?).

\textsuperscript{76} Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 15; Ch.L.A. XLIII 1244 R = SPP XIV, p. 3 = Rom.Mil.Rec. 11 bis = C.Pap.Lat 322 (unknown, end of 3\textsuperscript{rd} c.); P.Oxy. LVI 3874 (Oxyrhynchinos, 345–346?).

\textsuperscript{77} Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 26; P.Lund. VI 10 = SB VI 9359 (Arsinoitopolis Polis or Scenae Mandrae, 400).

\textsuperscript{78} Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 46; P.Sakaon 9 = P.Thead. 48 (Theadelphia, Arsinoites, 314–315). Mitthof (2001: 445–6 n. 110) opts for the military context of this papyrus; the document’s editor (Jouguet, P.Thead. 38, introd. 204–5) left open both the military and the civilian context (military praepositus or praepositus pagi); P.Sakaon 62 = P.Thead. 4 (Theadelphia, Arsinoites, 328). Pintaudi 2010: 340.
Tingitana (Thmoinepsi),\textsuperscript{79} ala Apriana (Hipponon),\textsuperscript{80} ala I Valeria dromedariorum (Prektis)\textsuperscript{81} and cohors I felix Theodosiana (Elephantine).\textsuperscript{82}

A final question: is there even a single unit that papyri demonstrate located elsewhere than the site in the \textit{Notitia}? Yes, papyri and inscriptions show some exceptions (see chart 2), although these instances do not necessarily challenge the \textit{Notitia}'s credibility. The \textit{Notitia} lists the legio II Flavia Constantia at Cusae and an inscription from the legionary fortress at Thebes also mentions that legion.\textsuperscript{83} This inscription, however, dated 293, belongs to the turbulent years of the Egyptian military expeditions of first, Galerius, then Diocletian.\textsuperscript{84} To no surprise, units in Egypt during that time changed their stations some time later, when the province was again peaceful. The legio II Flavia Constantia must have changed its location between 293 and around 400. In fact we have already established that the end of the third century and even the first half of the fourth century are not relevant to information recorded in the \textit{Notitia}. Such must also apply to the legio II Flavia Constantia, of course.

Two other units possibly seem at the wrong place, but only at first glance. The \textit{Notitia} stations the legio V Macedonica in Memphis, as papyri confirm.\textsuperscript{85} But papyri also show detachments of the legio V Macedonica operating in the Thebaid.\textsuperscript{86} Nevertheless, Memphis

\textsuperscript{79} Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 57; \textit{P.Strasb.} IV 197 with \textit{BL} V, 137; VII, 415 (Hermoupolites?, 4\textsuperscript{th} c.).

\textsuperscript{80} Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 64. Once again, it is the Patermouthis-archive that relates the data on the unit in Elephantine and accounts for the late dates; see above n. 71. \textit{P.Münch.} I 2 = \textit{W.Chr.} 470 with \textit{BL} I, 310; XI, 138 (Elephantine, 578); \textit{P.Lond.} V 1737 (Syene, 613). The \textit{Notitia} puts the cohors apud Elephantinem, which does not contradict that the unit was stationed on the island, just as the Patermouthis-archive attests for the unit stationed there in the sixth and seventh centuries. The \textit{Notitia}’s placement of units at both Syene and Contra Syene (XXXI, 35; 65) speaks for the location of the cohort on Elephantine itself, between the two other units. For the reading ‘Contra Syene’: Böcking 1849: 340, nn. 94–95; Brennan 1989: 200; Speidel 1992: 397–9.

\textsuperscript{81} Ch.L.A. XLV 1320 = SPP XIV, p. 4 = \textit{C.Pap.Lat.} 267 = \textit{C.Epist.Lat.} I 234 with \textit{BL} XII, 52 (Thebaid?, c.399); \textit{BGU} III 899 with \textit{BL} I, 20 (Philadelphia, Arsinoites, 4\textsuperscript{th} c.?); \textit{P.Mert.} I 43 V (Oxyrhynchos?, 5\textsuperscript{th} c.); \textit{SB} XIV 11854 (Oxyrhynchites?, 5\textsuperscript{th}–6\textsuperscript{th} cc.). The Coptic martyrdom of Panine and Paneu mentions as \textit{Macedonarius} a soldier named Philemon in Panopolis (which lies in the Thebaid as well): ϕίλημος δὲ πηγῶτος οὐρύρρυχος ἐν Εὐμενίτῃ τῇ ομοίῳ ομών (Orlandi 1987: 114 l. 22). In the context of the V Macedonica’s fourth-century presence in the Thebaid, this \textit{Macedonarius} is most likely not a misunderstanding for...
remained the V Macedonica’s base until at least the fifth century. A second seemingly problematic unit is the legio I Maximiana—at Philae in the Notitia (XXXI, 37.) In the 370s and 390s the legion (or its detachments) are known at Oxyrhynchos. Oxyrhynchos does not have a permanent garrison in the Notitia, a fact underlined by the papyri: the first half of the fourth century saw detachments of the Mauri scutarii at Oxyrhynchos, whereas the legio I Maximiana operated there in the second half of the fourth century. The two units might even have relieved one another. Consequently, an error cannot be demonstrated: deployment of the legio I Maximiana parallels that of the legio V Macedonica, based at Memphis, but known to have detachments in the Thebaid. The same seems to have been the case with the legio I Maximiana, only vice versa.

The last but equally important evidence for the credibility of the military lists in the Notitia is that most units, mentioned in the Notitia but not attested in the papyri, were stationed in regions where no papyri have survived. It would clearly be too much of a coincidence if only those papyri supporting the Notitia Dignitatum survived, while those papyri proving the Notitia wrong all belonged to units stationed in regions without papyri.

It is most likely, however, that Memphis was one of the locations of the legio V Macedonica for much longer, at least until the 560s, when the legio is last mentioned in Egypt. P.Cair.Masp. I 67005 with BL XI, 52 [Antinopolis?, 567–568]; for the date see Fournet 2008: 313. That papyri no longer explicitly mention the legion in Memphis does not prove its departure from of that location.
Archaeology is the last and still missing aspect of this study. Of the significant number of Late Antique military constructions in Egypt, most do not yield data (papyri, inscriptions, ostraca) about their garrisons, but they do confirm the picture that emerges from papyrological analysis. Camps at Thebes (Luxor),91 Babylon (Old Cairo),92 Narmuthis93 and Dionysias (western Fayum),94 for example, attest together with the papyrological evidence a military presence identical to that in the Notitia. The Late Roman military camps at Pelusium95 and Taposiris Magna96 support—without papyrological confirmation—the Notitia’s reliability on the presence of garrisons. The military buildings in Hieraconpolis and Sile even reveal the names of the units building the camps: the Notitia still mentions the cohors I Lusitanorum at Hieraconpolis;97 the fort in Sile, on the other hand, was constructed by an ala I Thracum and not the ala I Aegyptiorum, which the Notitia places there.98 But the Sile inscription, dated 288, cannot be taken as proof against the Notitia’s credibility, as argued above. Most probably, the ala I Aegyptiorum replaced the ala I Thracum at some point during the early decades of the fourth century and well before the Notitia’s compilation. Smaller structures like the camp at Magdolum on the fringes of the eastern Delta are not mentioned in the Notitia, as we suppose for numerous small military outposts.99 The Notitia names only the major bases.

In sum, all these different threads of evidence clearly suggest that the two Egyptian military lists in the Notitia report correct data on the location of garrisons and the specific units in Egypt c.400.

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Since, as here argued, the Egyptian lists of the Not.Dig. are reliable, the question of the Notitia’s credibility for other sectors of the Eastern Roman Empire arises. Admittedly, other eastern regions, like most of the Roman Empire, lack Egypt’s extensive papyrological

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95 Abd el-Maksoud et al. 1994: 95–103.
96 Grossmann 2005: 11–27; for the equation of the Notitia’s ‘Tacasiria’ (Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 39) with Taposiris Magna see Kaiser 2013: 295–309.
97 Not.Dig. Or. XXXI, 58; CIL III 22 = III Supp. 1 6626 = ILS 217 (Hieraconpolis, 288).
98 Not.Dig. Or. XXVIII, 27; CIL III Supp. 2 13578 (Sile, 288). For a summary of Late Roman military architecture in Egypt see Mackensen and Franke 2010: 81–94.
Some incidental evidence for the situation elsewhere may support this general contention. Schmitt extensively discusses the military dispositions in Libya from literary sources. But the *Notitia*’s account of the dux Libyorum’s command is lost, so for Libya a direct comparison between the literary evidence and the *Notitia* is impossible. Following the Mediterranean coastline further west to Africa would take this discussion beyond the pars Oriens and the scope of this paper. But even if the pars Occidens of the *Notitia* is commonly taken as less reliable than the pars Oriens, at least some information (e.g., parts of Africa) in the *Notitia*’s pars Occidens is accurate. Thus even the *Notitia*’s pars Occidens as documentation. Nevertheless, it is possible to check the reliability of certain sections of other military lists in the *Notitia*, as some scholars have done recently. Everett L. Wheeler assessed recent views of the Roman deployment in Colchis and Maurice Sartre studied the Roman defence system of southern Syria in the Hauran. For Roman deployment in Colchis, archaeology and literary sources form the basis of argument. Not all postings of the *Notitia* can be identified and connected with historical references or archaeological data. Direct Roman control into the mid-third century never extended far from the coast with indirect rule through client-kings for the interior. Late Roman coastal garrisons represented a revival of interest in Colchis after an extended hiatus. But Wheeler opts for the likely trustworthiness of the *Not.Dig.* and elaborates on Zuckerman’s earlier study of permanent units in the eastern Pontic region under the administration of the dux Armeniae in the *Notitia*. For Syria epigraphical evidence can be combined with archaeological remains and the *Not.Dig.*’s lists. Despite some concordances Sartre does not see the *Notitia* as a complete list of all military establishments in Syria—something not to be expected from a document listing only the major bases of permanent units of a dux or comes, and not temporary postings of the mobile pseudocomitatenses, comitatenses or palatini. Burgi and small outposts (garrisoned permanently or not) would not appear either, as already argued. Such small military stations, although known through archaeology and epigraphy and absent from the *Notitia*, cannot be a valid argument against the reliability of the *Notitia*’s entries for Syria.

Some incidental evidence for the situation elsewhere may support this general contention. Schmitt extensively discusses the military dispositions in Libya from literary sources. But the *Notitia*’s account of the dux Libyorum’s command is lost, so for Libya a direct comparison between the literary evidence and the *Notitia* is impossible. Following the Mediterranean coastline further west to Africa would take this discussion beyond the pars Oriens and the scope of this paper. But even if the pars Occidens of the *Notitia* is commonly taken as less reliable than the pars Oriens, at least some information (e.g., parts of Africa) in the *Notitia*’s pars Occidens is accurate. Thus even the *Notitia*’s pars Occidens as

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101 Zuckerman 1991: 527–40. But Wheeler (forthcoming) also points out the problem some ‘heirlooms’ in the *Not.Dig.* might pose, e.g., a fort far east on the Tigris in c.401, after Jovian’s treaty in 363.  
102 Parker (1986: 135–48) likewise offers a very positive picture of the correspondence between epigraphy, archaeology, and the *Not.Dig.* on the Arabian frontier, including the Hauran.  
103 *Dux Libyorum: Not.Dig. Or.* XXX; Schmitt 2001: esp. 583; 620.  
104 For Africa Le Bohec (2007: 431–41) is less positive regarding the *Not.Dig.*’s value, even if some archaeological finds agree with the *Notitia*’s information. Scharf (2005: 186–94)
exclusively an ideological ‘dream-world’ becomes less tenable, although ideological compositions can use real facts to make a work at least seem more realistic than it really is.  

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What the papyrological documentation combined with literary evidence, epigraphy, and archaeology argues for, is the absolute trustworthiness of the Egyptian military lists in the Notitia Dignitatum. The Notitia could not be proved incorrect, not even in one single case. The evidence and results from other parts of the Late Roman Empire do not contradict the contention that the Egyptian lists are reliable. Indeed, they argue for the credibility of the whole pars Oriens, even if we allow for some anomalies concerning the very peaceful province of Egypt, where the deployment proved by the Notitia seems to have remained in place for some hundred years, at least in its basic outlines. It might, and actually will, have been different in areas more affected by warfare and other disturbances than Egypt, but nevertheless the information given by the Notitia as a whole is correct – if only for a short time span, whose length depends on the region of the empire concerned.

In contrast to the ideological ‘dream-world’ propagated by some scholars, a study on the reliability of the Egyptian military lists can build on documentary evidence and suggest very strongly that the Notitia Dignitatum, especially its pars Oriens, is not an untrustworthy utopia, but an authentic record of the Late Roman army deployment c.400.

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compared tile stamps found at Mainz with units in the Not.Dig. under the dux Mogontiacensis, a command seen as a late alteration in the pars Occidens: of the eleven units under the dux Mogontiacensis, six are confirmed by tile stamps and two units (Cornacenses and Portisienses) known from tile stamps are absent in the Notitia (187). Unknown is whether the units of the dux Mogontiacensis still manufactured tiles when the pars Occidens was composed. Possibly all these tiles belong to an earlier phase of the site, only some units manufactured tiles (either outside the ducatus, or at places yet undiscovered), or they simply did not always stamp their tiles (188–94). For the problems the usually undated, not perishable and often stockpiled tiles may pose cf. Wheeler 2000: 286–8.  

105 Kulikowski 2000: 360. Clemente (2010: 125; 129; 132) states that even the western lists were not antiquated in the fifth century, though the situation in the Western Roman Empire was changing quite fast and the Notitia not the instrument to register all those changes.
Primary literature:

*CJ*


*Joh. Ruf.*


*Kyr. Scyth.*


*Not.Dig.*


Secondary literature:


Millar, F. 2006: *A Greek Roman Empire. Power and Belief under Theodosius II* (408–450), Berkeley, Los Angeles, London.


