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# A Note on the Establishment of the Date of the Rain Miracle under Marcus Aurelius

OLLI SALOMIES

The exact date of the famous Rain Miracle under Marcus Aurelius in the time of the Marcomannic wars has been a matter of some debate.<sup>1</sup> But excavations in Carnuntum since 1970 have, so it is said, brought forth new evidence, on the basis of which the date has been established as 11 June, AD 172 by W. Jobst, *op. cit.* (note 1), esp. p. 23ff. This evidence consists of a group of dedications, all, or at least all those where the date has survived, dated to June 11th, from Pfaffenberg near Carnuntum. The inscriptions are reproduced in AE 1982, 778ff.; it will be of some use to have a quick look at them here:

- AE 1982, 778 (used and reproduced by Jobst, but published by D. Knibbe, JÖAI 54 [1983] 136ff. no.2): fragments with traces of Antonine imperial nomenclature (two emperors being named) and a consular date said to correspond to AD 172: the exact date, 11 June, and the dedication formula *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) K(arnuntino?)* have not been preserved, but are supplied by Jobst and Knibbe.

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<sup>1</sup> See W. Jobst, 11. Juni 172 n.Chr. Der Tag des Blitz- und Regenwunders im Quadenlande (Öst. Ak. Wiss., Phil.-hist. Kl., Sitzungsber. 335), 1978, 7ff. and the bibliography given *ibid.* 8 note 2 (add e.g. H.Z. Rubin, Weather Miracles under Marcus Aurelius, *Athenaeum* 57 [1979] 357-380, who does not yet know Jobst's study, but argues for the date AD 172).

- 779: fragment with the text [II]I idus Iunias Max[imo et --- cos.], said to date from 172 (*Maximo et Orfito cos.*).
- 780: two fragments with the text III idus Iun[ias].
- 781: two fragments of an altar set up [pro s]alute of an imperial lady with the title *mater castrorum*, thought by Jobst and others to be Faustina.
- 782: two fragments with the date III i. Iun. and a fragmentary Diocletianic(?) consular date.
- 783: fragments of an altar with the text I.O.M.K., *pro salute dd.nn.* [Di]ocle[tiani et Maximiani etc.], dated [III id. I]unias, AD 297.
- 784: fragments of an altar with the date [I]II idus Iuni. and a fragmentary Constantinian consular date.
- 785: several fragmentary altars, all with the identical text I.O.M.K.

On the basis of these texts it can surely be concluded that 11 June must have been the date of some important event, at least for Carnuntum.<sup>2</sup> But Jobst, as mentioned above, goes much further and suggests that 11 June must have been the date of the Rain Miracle and that it must have taken place in 172, basing his view on the fact that the texts come from a temple area dedicated to Jupiter, where a monument with a portrait of Marcus Aurelius was erected in the early seventies, and that the dedications form a series, the earliest of which are (according to him) dated exactly to AD 172, namely AE 1982, 778 and (probably) 779.

In establishing the date of the Rain Miracle the two texts allegedly from 172 are thus clearly of primary importance.<sup>3</sup> Jobst's dating of them has not been

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<sup>2</sup> The abbreviated additional attribute given to Jupiter Optimus Maximus in these texts, K(-), has been expanded to K(*arnuntius*) by Jobst (p. 30 ff.), which is possible but not at all certain. Jobst thinks that the addition of this attribute refers to the Rain Miracle; and a dedication from 168 indeed still has only [I.] O.M. (AE 1982, 777); but the fact remains that the earliest precisely datable text with I.O.M.K. is AE 1982, 783 from 297.

<sup>3</sup> There is, of course, also the inscription from Aquincum, CIL III 3347, a better reading and a photo of which are given by Jobst, op. cit. p. 29 and Abb. 25, set up by two duoviri of Aquincum [I.O.M.(?) *pro salute I]mp. M. Aur. Antonini et L. Aur. Commodi et ordinis Aq(uincensium) ... III idus Iun. Orfito [et --- cos.]*. According to Jobst, the inscription is certainly from the year 172, because Commodus is not designated as *imperator*. But in 172 Commodus should have been called Caesar, and so those who want to date this inscription to 172 have to assume that this title has been omitted by mistake. But if the wording of this inscription is thus in any case faulty or at least misleading, one could, I think, equally well assume that *imp.* refers to two *imperatores*, being an abbreviation of *imp(eratorum)*. This

questioned,<sup>4</sup> but there are good reasons for doing so; accordingly, submitting the dating of these texts to a new scrutiny is the object of this article. Other problems connected with the Rain Miracle and the fixing of its date shall not be dealt with. It should, however, be observed that I am in no way trying to deny that the Rain Miracle could have happened in AD 172; on the contrary, it seems to me most likely that it did happen in that year (cf. Jobst, *op. cit.* 16ff.); as pointed out above, it is solely the dating of the two inscriptions and the possibility of using them for a study of the date of the Rain Miracle that shall be dealt with.

Let us start with AE 1982, 779, where only the letters *MAX* have survived of the consular date. The original reading could in theory have been *Max[imo et Orfito cos.]*, corresponding to AD 172; but there are other years in which one of the consuls was called Maximus, e.g. 223 (*Maximo II et Aeliano*), 233 (*Maximo et Paterno*), 234 (*Maximo II et Urbano*), not to mention later years, and so there are many possible supplements of the consular date in AE 1982, 779. In fact, the dating of this inscription, where the consul called Maximus is named first, to 172 is much less probable than its dating to one of the other years enumerated above or to some later year, for in an inscription of AD 172 from Pannonia we should, as we shall see, expect to find the consuls in the order Orfitus, Maximus, not Maximus, Orfitus; on the other hand, in 223, 233, 234 (and 256 etc.) the consul called Maximus is as a rule named first.<sup>5</sup>

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would take us to AD 178, and the consulate mentioned in CIL III 3347 would then be *Orfito [et Rufo cos.]* (in 178 Orfitus always comes first).

<sup>4</sup> See D. Knibbe, *JÖAI* 54 (1983) 136; G. Fowden, *Historia* 36 (1978) 83 note 1, 87; M.M. Sage, *Anc. Soc.* 18 (1987) 154-7, these scholars accepting Jobst's dating of the dedications and his further conclusions (though Sage p.171 thinks that 11 June is the date of the dedication of the statue, not that of the Miracle); even scholars who doubt Jobst's conclusions nevertheless accept his dating of AE 1982, 778 to 172, cf. A.R. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius, A Biography* (1987) 252, cf. 267 ("the new evidence ... conclusively demonstrating that Commodus was at the front in 172"); G. Alföldy, *Die Krise des Imperium Romanum und die Religion Roms*, in: *Religion und Gesellschaft in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (ed. W. Eck, 1989), 92. H. Halfmann, *Itinera Principum* (1986) 214, accepts the dating of AE 1982, 778 to the time of Marcus Aurelius, but he thinks that this inscription "lässt sich ... nicht genau in das Jahr 172 datieren".

<sup>5</sup> The order of the consuls' names in AE 1982, 779 in practice rules out the possibility that the inscription could be dated to AD 207, for although Degrassi's *Fasti consulares*, p.58, have the consuls in the order Maximus, Aper (the same order is given by P.M.M. Leunissen, *Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander* [1989] 135), the order used in inscriptions, papyri and other sources referring to this year is invariably Aper, Maximus.

But Jobst, too, only tentatively assigns AE 1982, 779 to AD 172 (op. cit., p. 26), his argumentation being mainly based on AE 1982, 778, an inscription which, according to him (p. 25), "zweifelsfrei in das Jahr 172 n.Chr. datiert werden muss". But if one assumes that AE 1982, 778 is from AD 172, grave problems arise. Let us have a look at the inscription as published by D. Knibbe (cf. above) and reproduced in the *Année Epigraphique*. The first three lines and the last line run as follows:

[I. O. M. K. pro salute] Imp. C[aes.]  
 [M. Aurel. A]nt. Aug. [Parth. Max.]  
 [et L.] Aurel. Ca[es. (etc.)]

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[III idus Iunias Qui]ntilio e[t Orfito c]os.

First of all, it is most striking that Commodus should have been called simply *L. Aurelius Caesar*: for the omission of Commodus' main name there are, as far as I can see, no parallels at all. But perhaps even more striking is the alleged consular date. It is true that one of the consuls of 172 was called Quintilius Maximus, but it was certainly not usual – to say the least – to use the gentilicium, not the cognomen of the consul in a consular date, if only one name was used of each consul.<sup>6</sup> But the nomenclature of the consul is not the only problem with the date; the order of the consuls' names, too, is problematic, for in an inscription of 172 from Pannonia one would prefer to find the order Orfitus, Maximus. To be sure, the year 172, unlike e.g. the year 207 (cf. note 5), belongs to those in which there is some variation in the order in which the consuls were named; but if one studies the consular dates of this year one observes that this variation is geographical: the order Maximus, Orfitus appears only in Italian inscriptions, whereas in the provinces only the order

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<sup>6</sup> I can find only the following examples of this from the second and third centuries: CIL XV 1435 from 129, *Iuventio* (i.e. *P. Iuventio Celso*) *II et Marcello II cos.*; CIL XV 733 from 148, *Sal(vio)* (i.e. *P. Salvio Iuliano*) *et Torq(uato) cos.*; ISM II 130 from 216, *Cornelio et Katio cos.*, the consuls meant being *P. Cadius Sabinus (II)* and *P. Cornelius Anullinus*. There are also some examples from the earliest Empire (but they cannot be used as parallels for a second century dating from Pannonia), e.g. (omitting, of course, cases where a consul is called by his gentilicium because he did not have a cognomen) the *Fasti Praenestini*, Inscr. It. XIII,2, 121. 133, where the consulate of *P. Sulpicius Quirinius* and *C. Valgius Rufus* in 12 BC is called *Quirinio et Valgio cos.*; CIL VI 10051 = ILS 5283, where *C. Sulpicius Galba cos.* AD 22 is called, as consul, simply *Sulpicius*; CIL IV 10718 (amphora), *Vitellio, Vipstano cos.* (AD 48).

Orfitus, Maximus is used. There is some overlapping only in the case of the votive inscription from Asculum Picenum set up by a slave, CIL IX 5177 = ILS 5450, where the "provincial" order Orfitus, Maximus is used.<sup>7</sup>

Faced with these problems, it seems opportune to try to find other supplements (and some other date) for AE 1982, 778, which is in fact not very difficult. In trying to date the inscription Jobst looked only for consuls called Quintilius; but there is another possibility, namely looking for consuls called Quintillus: the letter *l* looks like an *i* in many inscriptions, especially the second *l* in names ending in *-llus* or *-lla*, and thus some inscriptions mentioning consuls called Quintillus are in fact reported to have the reading *Quintillus*.<sup>8</sup>

Now, there were two consuls called Quintillus, Plautius Quintillus in 159 and M. Peducaeus Plautius Quintillus in 177. The latter held the consulship along with the emperor Commodus, and is accordingly always named after his colleague in consular dates; he cannot thus be thought of in supplementing the consular date in AE 1982, 778. But if we choose Quintillus cos. 159, the problems surrounding this inscription are solved and we are faced with a text where nothing is objectionable: the problem with the date disappears if we supply [*Qui*]ntilio (or perhaps rather [*Qui*]ntillo) e[*t* Prisco c]os. as the consular date, for Quintillus is the consul's cognomen, not his gentilicium, and the order of the consuls in 159 is invariably Quintillus, Priscus; and if the inscription is from 159, the problem of Commodus' nomenclature disappears, for we would then be dealing not with Commodus but with Marcus Aurelius as Caesar, who is in fact, under Pius, most often called *M. (Aelius) Aurelius Caesar* (see PIR<sup>2</sup> A 697). I thus suggest the following reading for the first three lines:

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<sup>7</sup> The order Maximus, Orfitus: CIL VI 1978 (=ILS 5024). XVI 246. 3601 (= Inscr. It. IV,1, 115 = ILS 1101). 3643 (= Inscr. It. IV,1,149 = ILS 6235). IX 4109 (= ILS 4190); AE 1954, 168 (Capua); HA Comm. 11,14 (and note also CIL VI 32638, where 172 is designated as *Maxim(o) cos.*: when only the name of one consul is used, it is usually the consul who is as a rule named first). – The order Orfitus, Maximus: CIL IX 5177 (cf. above). XIII 1783. VIII 2464 cf. 17952; ISM V 64; ILJug. 3112; Ann. Inst. 1870, 188 no. 224 = ILS 8719 (quarry inscription of provincial origin). This order is also used in the manuscript fasti.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. CIL VI 307 = ILS 3440; CIL IX 5823 = ILS 6048; AE 1971, 534 = IAMaroc 94 (the tabula Banasitana). Note also that female cognomina ending in *-lla* are often published as ending in *-ilia* (cf. e.g. the observations of H. Solin, *Arctos* 15 [1981] 109 and 18 [1984] 144; M. Leiwo, *Arctos* 16 [1982] 47 note 16).



[*I. O. M. pro salute*] *Imp. C*[*aes.*]  
[*T. Ael. Hadr. A*] *nt. Aug. [Pii et]*  
[*M.*] *Aurel. Ca*[*es. -----*]

The inscription is, however, so fragmentary that a definitive reconstruction of the original text is not possible. Perhaps this was not a votive inscription at all. In any case, what is, I think, beyond reasonable doubt is that the emperors named in the beginning are Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, that the inscription is from the year 159, and that it has nothing at all to do with the Rain Miracle. – It is, of course, of some interest to find Pius and the Caesar Marcus mentioned in an inscription of AD 159 from Carnuntum, but I will not pursue the matter further, this being the task of those engaged in studies concerning Carnuntum and Pannonia.