

ESTABLISHING ROMAN RULE IN EGYPT:
THE TRILINGUAL STELA OF C. CORNELIUS GALLUS
FROM PHILAE

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Introduction

When Octavian departed Egypt in 30 BC, he placed C. Cornelius Gallus, an *equus* by rank, in charge of the new Roman province *Aegyptus*. Gallus, who was responsible to Octavian himself, received the newly created title of *praefectus Alexandriae et Aegypti*, Prefect of Alexandria and Egypt.

Soon enough, not even three years after his appointment, Gallus incurred the emperor's utter displeasure. The prefect was dismissed by Augustus, returned to Rome, was convicted by the Senate and forestalled the impending banishment by committing suicide in 26 BC, as we are informed by Cassius Dio.¹

Gallus' alleged hubris and his assumed *damnatio memoriae* have much been discussed among ancient historians, papyrologists, and Egyptologists. In this respect, the most important and crucial Egyptian document is a trilingual inscription—hieroglyphic Egyptian, Latin, and Greek—dated to 16 April 29 BC (Fig. 1–5). It was carved on a stela re-discovered in 1896 in front of Augustus' temple at Philae (Fig. 6),² which the prefect Rubius Barbarus had dedicated in Augustus' year 18 (13/12 BC).³ Cut into two parts, the stela had been reused in the foundations, presumably of the temple's altar.

The victory stela of pink Aswan granite, originally about 165 cm high, now 152 cm by 108 cm, is housed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (CG 9295). When cut for re-use, parts of the top and approximately 8 cm in the middle were removed, but the estimated width of the gap can be reconstructed by the missing Greek and Latin letters.

¹ Cassius Dio LIII 23,5–7.

² Porter and Moss 1939, 253; Erman 1896, 469–470; Lyons 1896, no. 51.

³ Bernard 1969, no. 140.

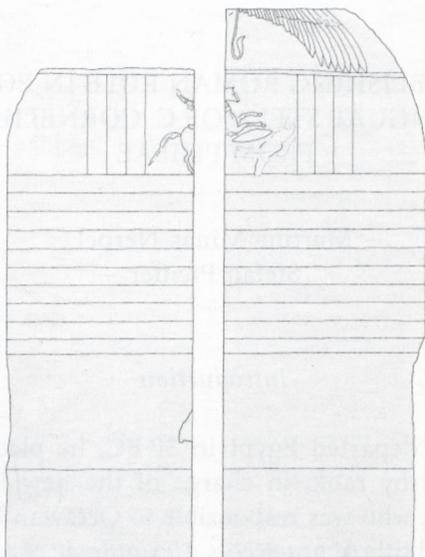


Fig. 1: The Gallus stela (drawing by U. Denis).

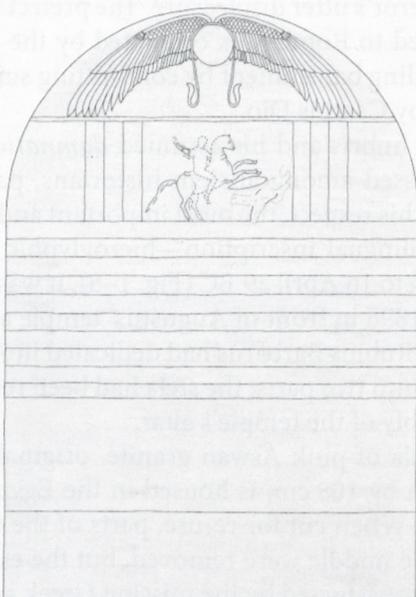


Fig. 2: The Gallus stela: Reconstruction (drawing by U. Denis).



Fig. 3: The Gallus stela 1896 (Lyons 1896, Pl. 51).



Fig. 4: The Gallus stela 1896 (Lyons, Pl. 52).



Fig. 5: The Gallus stela, Egyptian Museum Kairo, CG 9295.

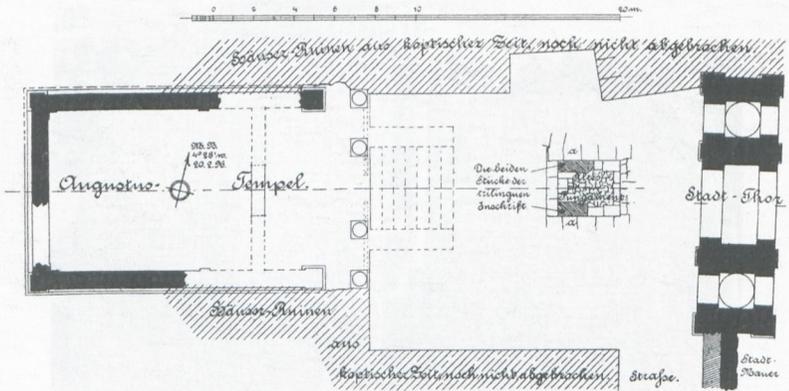


Fig 6: Location of the stela below the altar (Erman 1896, fig. on p. 470).

The layout of the stela is purely Egyptian. In the lunette, the traditional Egyptian winged solar disk is depicted. In the register below, a horseman attacking an enemy, both Hellenistic in style, is carved in sunken relief, framed by three columns of hieroglyphic text on both sides.

Below the relief, there are twenty-eight lines of inscription, ten in hieroglyphs, nine in Latin and nine in Greek.⁴ The Latin and Greek texts convey, with minor modifications, the same message, since the Greek had been translated from the original Latin text, which might have been written by Gallus himself (for details, see F. Hoffmann's article in this volume). In both the Latin and the Greek version, which are formally dedicatory texts to *Nilus adiutor* or *Neilos synleptor* ('Nile, the helper') and the paternal gods, the installation of Gallus as prefect, his military campaigns and his relationship to the Meroitic king are reported.

The main hieroglyphic inscription, which does not mention the prefect once by name, is self-contained and by no means is a translation of the Latin text, but it relates in more general terms to some of the facts mentioned in the two Classical versions. It starts with the traditional Egyptian dating formula that dates the stela to year 1 of *Kaisaros* (= Octavian). In contrast to the Latin and the Greek text, the following hieroglyphic text is not a dedicatory, but a 'historical' inscription. It commences with the appraisal of Gallus' military abilities and his care for Egypt in a traditional Egyptian way that is usually reserved for the king. This corresponds in many respects to the Satrap stela⁵ of Ptolemy, son of Lagos (the later Ptolemy I Soter I), which is about three hundred years older than the Gallus stela. The Egyptian inscription is much less specific than the Greek and Latin with respect to the Nubian campaign and the Egyptian uprising crushed by Gallus, but reports that Egypt receives precious goods from Punt, Nubia, and India. Gallus expands Egypt and the borders of the new Roman province are defined by mentioning Gallus' wars to the east and west of Egypt. In contrast to the Greek and Latin texts, the Egyptian refers explicitly to Gallus' activities in building and extending Egyptian shrines or temples and to gifts to the Egyptian deities, especially to Khnum of Elephantine. This is the reason for the abundant flow of Hapi, the all-important Nile inundation. The last point of the hieroglyphic version emphasises that Gallus also pays particular attention to Isis and Osiris, the deities of Philae where the stela had been originally erected.

⁴ For a new edition of all three texts as well as a historical and archaeological commentary see Hoffmann, Minas-Nerpel, and Pfeiffer 2009.

⁵ CGC 22182: Kamal 1904–1905, I: 168–171; II: pl. 56; Sethe 1904 (*Urk.* II), 11–22. Roeder 1959, 97–106 (translation and short commentary). For a historical analysis see Schäfer (forthcoming).

Already in 1896, the year when the stela was re-discovered, Adolf Erman prepared the *editio princeps* of all three inscriptions, but provided only a fragmentary translation and almost no commentary for the hieroglyphic inscription. The Latin and Greek text have often been translated since.⁶ Due to the reuse of the stone and the lacuna through the middle of the stela, all three texts are badly damaged. In addition, the granite is very hard which made it difficult to give especially the hieroglyphs their distinctive form. As a result they often look quite awkward. It is therefore not surprising that after Erman very few scholars have translated and interpreted the hieroglyphic text or only parts of it: Ulrich Wilcken in 1897, Edda Bresciani in 1989 and 1992, and Richard Holton Pierce in 1996. All translations markedly differ, are even contradictory in detail: the deeds and actions described in the hieroglyphic texts are sometimes understood to refer to Gallus, sometimes to Octavian, although the Latin and Greek clearly speak of Gallus only. The identity of the horseman in the centre of the picture is part of this problem. Again, some think of Octavian, others of Gallus. In addition, no publication—except for Erman's initial one in 1896—discussed all three texts together. Therefore, a new edition of all three texts has been published in 2009.⁷ This publication also comprises extensive commentaries as well an archaeological and iconographical analysis, thus studying in the visual and the textual components of the Gallus stela in conjunction with one another, which in the past have often been separated.

In this article, the prefect's self-presentation will be analysed based on both the visual and textual evidence of his stela and its political, social, and historical context.⁸ For this, the identity of the horseman in the lunette needs to be established. It can be assumed that Gallus himself ordered to be depicted as a triumphant victor in Hellenistic

⁶ See Bernard 1969, no. 128 (including an extensive bibliography).

⁷ Hoffmann, Minas-Nerpel, and Pfeiffer 2009, 1–5, 19–44, for a full discussion of the history of research.

⁸ For a discussion of the term 'self-presentation', which includes visual medias and written sources, see Baines 2004, 34–36. Although Baines analyses Ptolemaic self-presentations, the theoretical background can also be applied to the early Roman period, in particular to a Roman general and prefect depicted in Hellenistic tradition on a trilingual stela with otherwise Egyptian appearance. It is certainly necessary to look at both the visual AND all the textual components of the Gallus Stela with regard to the social context. They are not independent sources, as some Egyptologists, archaeologists, or ancient historians tend(ed) to imply because of the lack of knowledge or interest, with few exceptions.

King of Upper- and Lower Egypt". Interpreting the horseman as Gallus for the first time, Wilcken translated:

The prefect of Alexandria and Egypt [appointed by the King] Caesar.¹⁰

The title is attested in hieroglyphs only on the Gallus stela. Wilcken presumed in 1897 that it might be the hieroglyphic equivalent of *praefectus Alexandriae et Aegypti*,¹¹ but there is no further evidence for this assumption.

2) *Bresciani (1989)*

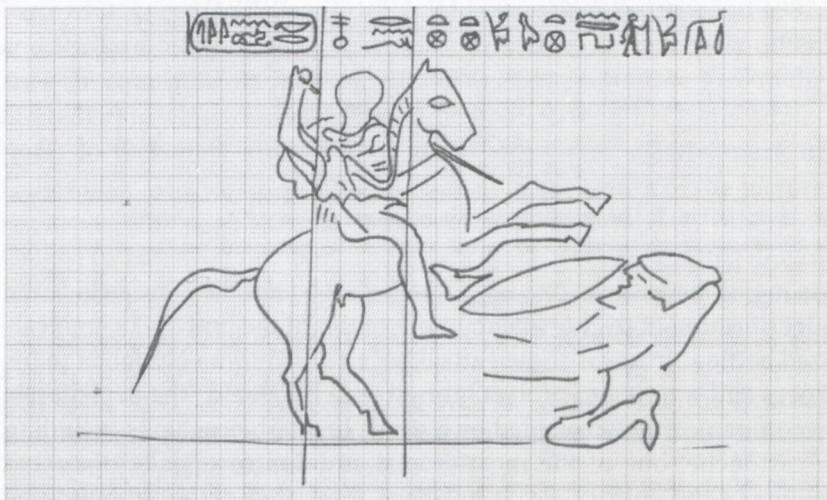


Fig. 8: The lunette of the Gallus stela by Edda Bresciani.

Almost one hundred years later, in 1989, Edda Bresciani published a new translation and interpretation of the hieroglyphic inscription accompanying the horseman (Fig. 8):¹²

dd mdw in wr n T3-mry Šm^c.w Mh.w [rn=f nfr] Krnrwys

Words spoken by the Great one of Ta-meri, of Upper and Lower Egypt,
[his beautiful name is] Cornelius.

Bresciani reads the cartouche as *Cornelius* relating it to the first Prefect of Egypt. In the lacuna, she restores *rn=f nfr*, referring to the

¹⁰ Wilcken 1897, 76.

¹¹ Wilcken 1897, 75, suggested translating *T3-mry* as "Alexandria".

¹² Bresciani 1989, 93–98; Bresciani 1992, 99–102.

introduction of the “nomi di cittadini notabili romani” on both obelisks at Beneventum dating to Domitian’s reign.¹³ There, *rn=f nfr* introduces several times the name of the dedicator of the obelisks.

3) *The New Interpretation by Hoffmann/Minas-Nerpel/Pfeiffer:*¹⁴

Collating the texts in Cairo in 2005 and 2006 we could neither recognize *Kaisaros* nor *Cornelius*. The cartouche can only be read as *Romaïos*, referring to Octavian.



ḏd mdw ỉn wr n T3-mrj Šm^c.w Mḥ.w [- -] (H3rwmys)

Words spoken by the Great one of *T3-mrj* (= Egypt), of (?) Upper- and Lower Egypt [Gallus(?), representative of the son of Re/whom the son of Re has chosen] (*Romaïos*).

The horseman is therefore Gallus and it is made clear by the hieroglyphic inscription that he was only Octavian’s representative. His name was not written in a cartouche, which would indeed have meant a glaring insolence since only pharaoh’s name could be written in a cartouche. Octavian’s name is once again attested in the first line of the hieroglyphic text below the lunette:

ḥ3.t-sp 1.t ỉbd 4 pr.t sw 20 ḥr ḥm Hr ḥwn-nfr ỉm3^{-c} ḥk3 ḥk3.w -- [stp.n Pt]ḥ K3srs) ʿnh ḏ.t

Regnal year 1, fourth month of the winter season (Pharmuthi), day 20 (= 16 April 29 BC), under his person, the Horus: Perfect youth, mighty of arm, ruler of the rulers—[chosen by Pta]h, *Kaisaros*), may he live forever.

One should not be confused by Octavian’s having two different names on this stela, *Romaïos* in the lunette and *Kaisaros* in the main inscription. Egyptian pharaohs had traditionally five names, and two were written in cartouches, the birth name or nomen and the throne name or prenomen. The names of Octavian/Augustus are well attested, due to the fact that under the first Roman emperor a copious decoration and building programme was initiated in Egypt, not only along the

¹³ Bresciani 1986, 83–85; Bresciani 1989, 95, n. 9; Bresciani 1992, 102: According to Bresciani, Titus Iulius Lupus, prefect of Egypt AD 70–71, might have dedicated the obelisks and is therefore introduced by *rn=f nfr*. For the obelisks at Beneventum see Erman 1896, 149–158; Müller 1969, 10–12. For *rn=f nfr* see De Meulenaere 1966.

¹⁴ For a detailed commentary, see Hoffmann, Minas-Nerpel, and Pfeiffer 2009.

Nile, but also especially in Lower Nubia. Because of its military importance, the *Dodekaschoinos* (the northern part of Lower Nubia) received substantial political and ideological attention in the early years of Octavian's/Augustus' reign. In particular after the peace treaty of Samos (21/20 BC) when the southern frontier of the *Imperium Romanum* was established at Hierasykaminos (Maharraqa), and when an end was put to the conflict between Rome and Meroe, an explicit manifestation of the new ruler as pharaoh was required in the *Dodekaschoinos* and several Egyptian temples were built in Lower Nubia where Octavian/Augustus appeared venerating Egyptian and local Nubian gods.¹⁵

Kalabsha, with its temple dedicated to Isis and Mandulis, the Nubian sun god, demonstrates strikingly the rapid development in this period. The Kalabsha temple was built in the late Ptolemaic period, and a gateway was added under Octavian. The temple was then rebuilt, but never finished, under Augustus. When it was dismantled and moved from its original location in Lower Nubia to a place near Philae as part of the large rescue effort led by the UNESCO to save it from the waters of Lake Nasser, the gateway was discovered. It had been reused for the foundation of the later Augustan extension to the temple. As Erich Winter proved, the gateway had been decorated under Octavian in the years 30 to 27 BC,¹⁶ in exactly the same period as the Gallus stela. Beside the Gallus' victory memorial, the Kalabsha-gateway is therefore one of the first Egyptian monuments to bear Octavian's name and to provide information concerning the period of establishing Roman rule in Egypt.

In both cartouches (nomen and prenomen) Octavian could be called *Kaisaros*¹⁷ ('Son of Caesar') or—with a Greek adjective—*Romaïos* ('the Roman'), for example, attested in Dendera¹⁸ and

¹⁵ Hölbl 2004; Verhoeven 2008.

¹⁶ Winter 2003.

¹⁷ According to Ratkowitsch 2001, 37–44, 'Kaisaros' is probably an elliptic form for 'son of Caesar'. The name Kaisaros is first attested in a cartouche for Ptolemy XV Kaisar, the son of Caesar and Cleopatra VII. Originally, Kaisaros, the short form for 'son of Kaisar/Caesar', was used to legitimize Ptolemy as Caesar's son. In Egyptian documents, Octavian kept this name in its genitive form since he wanted to be regarded as the true son of Caesar, even though he was 'only' adopted. Ratkowitsch proposed that the later emperors as pharaohs kept the name in its genitive form as a kind of title. However, it might also be possible that the genitive was only used since the priests adopted the dating formula of Greek official documents.

¹⁸ Gauthier 1917, 24, no. 90; Grenier 1989, 17 no. 7; von Beckerath 1999, 248–249; E 14; Cauville 2007, 32.

Kalabsha.¹⁹ Later on, *Autokrator* ('emperor') and *Sebastos* (the 'august one') were added.²⁰ It does not surprise at all to find Octavian having these two different names—*Romaïos* and *Kaisaros*—on one *single* monument, for example the Kalabsha-gateway and the Gallus stela. On the Kalabsha gate, Octavian was depicted in veneration before Mandulis and the deities of Philae, especially Isis to whom the *Dodekaschoinos* belonged. *Romaïos* serves as his nomen and *Kaisaros* as his prenomen.²¹

2. *The Iconographic Analysis of the Lunette*

The horseman, Hellenistic in style, does not fit well on an otherwise Egyptian stela. Gallus, who probably wrote the Latin inscription himself, seems very likely to have also ordered the depiction of an attacking rider in the triumphal attitude, mounted on a rearing horse. However, a *living* horseman in combat is highly unusual as a *relief* motif, so that we need to investigate the possible source.

In the early Hellenistic period, rulers would rather be honoured with equestrian *statues* placed on a public square, imitating Alexander the Great,²² who had substantially influenced the motif of combat scenes with the mounted warriors, as attested by the Alexander mosaic discovered in the Casa del Fauno, Pompei.²³ From the second century BC onwards, the equestrian statue was also used to represent generals or very high-ranking citizens, especially in the Hellenistic East.²⁴ In the Roman Republic, in contrast, it was uncommon for senators or high-ranking citizens to be represented in such a way in public places, but possible in sanctuaries that were not controlled by the state. Sulla's equestrian monument from 82 BC marks a change in the public representation of horsemen, thus proving his superior status in the

¹⁹ Gauthier 1911–1914, I: 57, 142, 144, 342; cf. Winter 1979, 70, n. 5.

²⁰ Grenier 1989, 9–15. See also Gundlach 2008.

²¹ Winter 1979, 67; Winter 2003, pl. 46; Dendera: Gauthier 1917, 24, XC.

²² Laubscher 1991, 223–224; Bergemann 1990, 36; Siedentopf 1968, 13.

²³ Pfrommer 1989, 3, pl. 1, Beilage. See also Calcani 1989. The Alexander battle mosaic from Pompei is generally seen as a late Hellenistic copy of a drawing that was created around 300 BC, probably ordered by Seleukos I Nikator; see Andreae 2004, 69–82 (including a bibliography), especially pp. 77–78 for the date.

²⁴ For example, an equestrian monument of the Emperor Aemilius Paullus was erected in Delphi in 168/7 BC after he had defeated Perseus of Macedonia in the battle of Pydna. See Kähler 1965; Bergemann 1990, 151, E 106.

Roman Republic.²⁵ In the late Republic, however, it became more and more common to put up such equestrian statues also in public places, including those of Octavian.²⁶

Horsemen are also well known from Greek and Roman *reliefs*. The first historical battle scene which includes a rider in combat is attested on the Athena Nike Temple in Athens (430/20 BC).²⁷ Latest around 400 BC the motif of a young, heroic horseman conquering an enemy can be found on Attic tombstones,²⁸ for example on the tomb stela of Dexileos, son of Lysanias (394/3 BC).²⁹ Although he died in the battle, Dexileos appears as a victorious horseman who spears a naked Greek enemy lying below his mounting horse. Hellenistic and Roman tomb monuments stand in this tradition and quite commonly depict horsemen, but of course only *deceased* ones conquering barbaric enemies.

It was therefore quite unusual that Gallus as a *living* general wished to be depicted as a horseman in relief scene. The audience for his self-presentation included Greek, Roman, and Egyptian visitors, assuming that the Gallus stela once stood in a public place of the Isis temple-complex.³⁰ Greeks and Romans will doubtlessly have recognized the triumphant attitude without any problems. At the same time, Egyptians could also understand this type of representation, since temple walls—especially on pylons—showed the *pharaoh* slaughtering enemies, even if the Egyptian king was never shown riding a horse in combat. This iconographical detail is only known in the Hellenistic period from the Raphia monument,³¹ which dates to 217 BC.

²⁵ Brune 1999, 231.

²⁶ Bergemann 1990, 34, 57–59, P 5.

²⁷ Borchardt 2002, 100–101, cat. 4.13, fig. 8.

²⁸ The eldest source so far is a fragment of a tombstone from Chalandri north of Athens that shows a horse's head and below it the enemy's head. It is kept in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Inv. no. 742. Clairmont 1993, 88–89, no. 2.130 (v).

²⁹ Athens, Kerameikos P 1130, marble, 1.75 m high; Clairmont 1993, 143–145, no. 2.209 (v). Knigge 1988, 111–113; Hurwit 2007, 35–60.

³⁰ For a detailed discussion where the Gallus stela might once have stood, see Hoffmann, Minas-Nerpel, and Pfeiffer 2009, 16–18.

³¹ For the Raphia monument see Thissen 1966. The synodal decree is attested in three versions of which two are kept in the Egyptian Museum Cairo: 1) The fragment from Memphis (CGC 31088): Kamal 1904–1905, I; 218–219.; II: pl. 74 (incorrectly labelled no. 21088). 2) The fragment from Tell el-Maskhuta (CGC 50048): Gauthier and Sottas 1925. 3) The fragment from Tod disappeared shortly after its discovery (1934–36) but has been published on the basis of photographs: Malinine 1960, 77–90. See Laubscher 1991, pl. 46–47 (CC 31088, 50048). See also Pfrommer 1998, 206–207 and fig. 29.

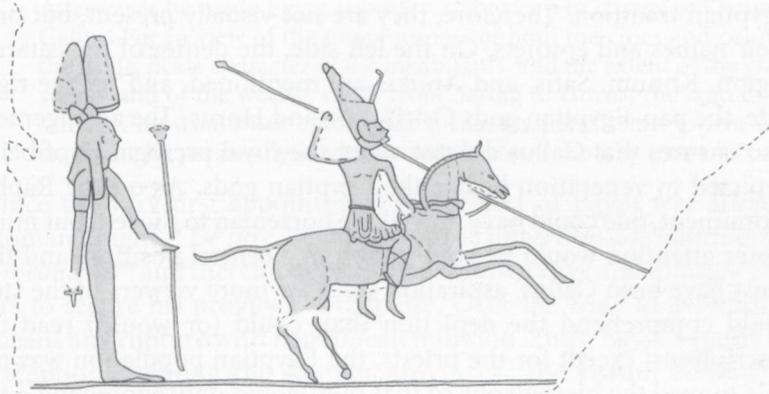


Fig. 9: The lunette of the Raphia monument: CGC 31088 (drawing by U. Denis).

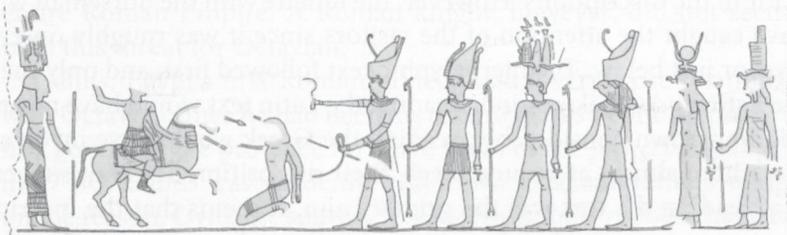


Fig. 10: The lunette of the Raphia monument: CGC 50048 (drawing by U. Denis).

On both versions kept at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Fig. 9–10), Ptolemy IV Philopator and his wife Arsinoe III are facing the enemy and several Egyptian gods. The Hellenistic pharaoh is depicted as a triumphant horseman spearing an enemy who has fallen to his knees who—in contrast to the Gallus stela—is unprotected by a shield and already fettered. With this depiction, the Ptolemaic ruler imitates Alexander the Great, but at the same time the Raphia lunette combines the traditional Egyptian representation of a pharaoh punishing enemies with the Hellenistic element of a horseman in combat. Gallus' pose might have been misunderstood as an Alexander-*imitatio* or a Ptolemy-like immortalisation, but the main message was conveyed: He was a glorious general, proud of his victories. The hieroglyphic line above his head made it clear that he had been installed by Octavian.

The depiction of the horseman on the centre of the lunette created yet another problem: the Egyptian deities could not be shown behind the Roman prefect. This would have contravened well-established

Egyptian tradition. Therefore, they are not visually present, but only their names and epithets. On the left side, the deities of the cataract region, Khnum, Satis, and Anukis are mentioned, and on the right side, the pan-Egyptian gods Osiris, Isis, and Horus. The arrangement also ensures that Gallus did not adopt the royal prerogative of being depicted in veneration before the Egyptian gods. As on the Raphia monument, one could have moved the horseman to the left, but much closer attention would be paid to him in a central position, and this must have been Gallus' aspiration since far more viewers of the stela could comprehend the depiction than could (or would) read the inscriptions; except for the priests, the Egyptian population was not able to read the hieroglyphs so that they would only apprehend a triumphant Hellenistic horseman. Those who could read the Latin and/or the Greek would have easily recognized Gallus, named as the main actor in the inscriptions. However, the lunette with the horseman will have caught the attention of the visitors since it was roughly on eye level or just below. The hieroglyphic text followed first, and only then the Latin and Greek version. Reading the Latin text would have meant bending down considerably, reading the Greek would have involved crouching almost at ground level. Their disposition does not suggest that reading the text was the primary aim. It seems that the inscriptions were important and necessary for the stela as an entity but the visual element—the triumphant horseman spearing an enemy—was the main feature for the audience.

The rider in combat symbolizes Gallus' military victories, which might have been a small compensation for not being allowed a formal triumph in Rome, since he did not hold the power of *imperium*. At the same time, the Hellenistic depiction of a glorious horseman could not have been misunderstood as insolence, especially not at one of the outward boundaries of the Roman Empire.

3. *Gallus' Self-Portrayal according to His Stela*

Literary Sources

According to Roman tradition, only a person of senatorial rank could be appointed to govern a province of the Roman empire. Octavian, however, broke with this practice by appointing Gallus, an *eques* only, as described by Cassius Dio:

Afterwards he made Egypt tributary and gave it in charge of Cornelius Gallus. For in view of the populousness of both the cities and country, the facile, fickle character of the inhabitants, and the extent of the grain-supply and of the wealth, so far from daring to entrust the land to any senator, he would not even grant a senator permission to live in it, except as he personally made the concession to him by name.³²

Since the very first appointment the prefect of Egypt was always a Roman knight.³³ *De iure*, he possessed the *imperium ad similitudinem proconsulis*³⁴ and therefore extensive administrative and military powers to secure his province. Otherwise, Octavian tried to avoid by all means any rupture with Republican tradition. Thus, Egypt's status was exceptional among the Roman provinces. The reason behind not appointing a senator as prefect was that an usurper in Egypt could potentially endanger the grain supply of Rome and easily finance an army or bribe legions to support him, thus gaining power over the entire Roman Empire. A Roman knight, however, did not seem to pose this threat for Octavian.

Gallus, Egypt's first Roman prefect, had a very close relationship with Octavian since he had been his *condiscipulus* ('disciple').³⁵ He had governed the province for three years to the *princeps*' liking, but in 27 BC, Gallus was suddenly withdrawn. Ancient authors disagree on the reason. Ovid, the source closest in time, only reports that Gallus had committed a *crimen* against Augustus.³⁶ In a different context, the Augustan poet is more specific:³⁷ "The scandal for Gallus was not that he had celebrated Lycoris, but that he could not hold his tongue after

³² Cass. Dio LI 17,1 (Translation: E. Cary, Loeb).

³³ Cf. Tac. ann. II 59; Arr. an. II 5,7; for the legal view: Geraci 1983, 143–146; 163–176; cf. Geraci 1995; Herklotz 2007, 228. Her view that a local prefect should remain in office for several years since the province's population would otherwise hardly have become used to an annually changing *promagistrate*, is unfounded because this also happened in other provinces.

³⁴ Dig. I 17,1 (Ulpian, ad edict. 15): *praefectus Aegypti non prius deponit praefecturam et imperium, quod ad similitudinem proconsulis lege sub Augusto ei datum est, quam Alexandriam ingressus sit successor eius, licet in provinciam venerit: et ita mandatis eius continentur*; cf. Geraci 1989; Jördens 1997, 326–327.

³⁵ Amm. XVII 4,51.

³⁶ By mentioning this *crimen* in a conditional clause (*si falsum est*), Ov. am. III 9, 63–64, suggests that Gallus had indeed committed a crime: *Tu quoque, si falsum est temerati crimen amici, / sanguinis atque animae prodige Galle tuae.*

³⁷ Am. III 9, 63f. and Trist. II 445–446.

having too much wine."³⁸ It seems that slandering Augustus had caused Gallus' fall from grace.

Suetonius—more than a hundred years later—only mentions in his biography of Augustus that in 26 BC the *princeps* had surrendered Gallus to the Senate for sentencing. The reason is provided in his treatise *de Grammaticis*, in which Suetonius reports one of the gravest crimes (*gravissima crimina*) of the prefect: He was living with the grammar teacher Q. Caecilius Epirota!³⁹ This man had fallen in disgrace because he had allegedly tried to establish a relationship with Agrippa's wife and had therefore been banished. Through his close contact with Epirota, Gallus had directly acted against the imperial wish. Suetonius reports further that accusations (*denuntiationes*) and senatorial resolutions (*sentusconsulta*) against Gallus were made during the course of the trial, which led to his suicide.⁴⁰ We learn no detail at all about these denunciations and resolutions.

More than a hundred years after Suetonius, Cassius Dio offers more specific reasons. At first, he describes the exemplary behaviour of the military commander Agrippa, who did not abuse the honours received from Augustus for his own self-indulgence. Cassius Dio then reports Gallus' actions—in contrast to Agrippa—concluding with Gallus' suicide after being banished by the Senate:⁴¹

On the other hand, Cornelius Gallus was encouraged to insolence by the honour shown him. Thus, he indulged in a great deal of disrespectful gossip about Augustus and was guilty of many reprehensible actions besides; for he not only set up images of himself practically everywhere in Egypt, but also inscribed upon the pyramids a list of his achievements. For this act he was accused by Valerius Largus, his comrade and intimate, and was disfranchised by Augustus, so that he was prevented from living in the emperor's provinces. After this happened, many others attacked him and brought numerous indictments against him. The senate unanimously voted that he should be convicted in the courts, exiled, and deprived of his estate, that this estate should be given to Augustus, and that the senate himself should offer sacrifices. Overwhelmed by grief, Gallus committed suicide before the decrees took effect.

³⁸ Ov. trist. II 445–446: *non fuit opprobrio celebrasse Lycorida Gallo, sed linguam nimio non tenuisse mero.*

³⁹ Suet. gramm. 16; for the chronological problems see Stickler 2002, 18, who also assumes that this matter could not have been the main focus of the accusations against Gallus.

⁴⁰ Suet. gramm. 66, 2.

⁴¹ Cass. Dio LIII 23,5–7.

Other than Cassius Dio, Ammianus notes in the second half of the fourth century that the Senate indicted Gallus for the exploitation of the new province. In a comment of the late fourth century grammarian Servius on Vergil's tenth *Eclogue* one even reads that Gallus was thought to have conspired against Augustus.⁴²

According to the Classical authors, four different reasons are given for Gallus' revocation:

1. The excessive pursuit of glory.
2. The lack of respect for Augustus.
3. The exploitation of Egypt.
4. A conspiracy against Augustus.

We cannot determine the real reason with any certainty. Point 4 (a conspiracy against Augustus) seems the least likely, since a conspirator against Augustus would certainly not have been allowed to stay in Rome for some time. He would also have received more severe punishment than banishment and loss of fortune.

Point 3 (the accusation of exploitation) seems likewise less convincing: The Senate did probably not have the right to judge in a trial *de repetundis* the actions of a prefect in office. Therefore, the reasons given by Cassius Dio and Ovid ultimately seem to have caused the *renuntiatio amicitiae* of Augustus: it was Gallus' extreme pursuit of glory, which led him to step out of the shadow of Augustus and to be disrespectful to him.⁴³

The Gallus Stela

Let us now turn to Gallus' victory stela erected on Philae in 29 BC. The Greek and Latin versions are clearly relevant with reference to Cassius Dio's allegations that Gallus had published a 'complete inventory of his deeds' in Egypt. The Latin version reads as follows:

- (1) Gaius Cornelius, son of Gnaeus, Gallus, Roman knight, after the kings (= the Ptolemies) (2) were defeated by Caesar, son of God, first

⁴² Serv. ecl. 10,1: *postea cum venisset in suspicionem, quod contra eum coniuraret, occisus est.*

⁴³ This also coincides with yet another quote by Suetonius, which mentions Gallus' ungrateful and ill-meaning attitude as cause of his withdrawal: Aug. LVI 2: *ingratum et malivolum animum.*

Prefect of Alexandria and Egypt, (3) vanquisher of the Theban insurrection within fifteen days, during which he vanquished the enemy twice in battle, conqueror of five towns, (namely) Borexis, (4) Coptos, Ceramice, Diospolis Megale, (and) Ophieon, after the leaders of their insurrections were caught, (5) after the army was lead beyond the Nile cataract, a place to which by neither the (6) Roman people nor the kings of Egypt were arms brought, after the Thebaid, the general fear of all (7) kings, was subdued, after envoys of the king of the Ethiopians were heard near Philae and after this (8) king was received into custody, after a tyrant of the *Triacotaschoenus* of Ethiopia from there on was established, gave a donation to the hereditary gods and Nile Helper.

The text emphasises two important actions of the prefect:

1. He crushed a revolt in Upper Egypt.
2. He reorganised the political status of the *Triakontaschoinos*.

Both these actions will now be further investigated with a particular focus on the competence of the first prefect.

3.1 *Termination of the Egyptian Revolts*

Gallus reports a revolt in Upper Egypt naming five cities as centres. Not all of them can be clearly located now, but with the focus on Coptos in the north and Diospolis Megale (Thebes) in the south, a considerable rebellious territory can be identified. The prefect succeeded in appeasing the region at lightning speed.

Also the literary sources refer to indigenous uprisings after Octavian's conquest of Egypt. Cassius Dio writes that "all citizens, who rebelled for some time, were finally subdued".⁴⁴ The contemporary Strabo reports that "Cornelius Gallus, the first prefect of the land instated by Caesar attacked the rebellious Heroönpolis (Pithom in the east Delta) and captured it with the help of few (soldiers), and an uprising that had started in the Thebais because of (taxing) tributes he resolved quickly".⁴⁵ As a reason for the uprising the literary sources give the exploitation of the new subjects by Octavian. Cassius Dio even specifies this: "large sums were also collected from anyone who was

⁴⁴ Cassius Dio LI 17,4: Αἴγυπτος μὲν οὕτως ἐδοιολώθη· πάντες γὰρ οἱ ἀντισχόντες αὐτῶν χρόνον τινὰ ἐχειρώθησαν, ὡς που καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον σφισιν ἐναργέστατα προέδειξεν.

⁴⁵ Strabo XVII 1,53: Γάλλος μὲν γε Κορνήλιος, ὁ πρῶτος κατασταθεὶς ἑπαρχος τῆς χώρας ὑπὸ Καίσαρος, τὴν τε Ἡρώων πόλιν ἀποστᾶσαν ἐπελθὼν δι' ὀλίγων εἶλε, στάσιν τε γενηθεῖσαν ἐν τῇ Θηβαΐδι διὰ τοὺς φόρους ἐν βραχεῖ κατέλυσε.

accused of any kind of misdemeanour. In addition, they demanded two-thirds of their property from everybody else, even if there were no complaints against them".⁴⁶

Thus, Octavian had won the war, but—as indicated by the revolts—not the hearts of the indigenous population because of his harsh taxation laws. The conqueror nevertheless made sure to be portrayed as liberator who ended the wrongful regime of the Ptolemies. In an epigram on a statue of Apollo found in Egypt, for example, the emperor is named Zeus Eleutherios and Zeus Augustus, who came to Egypt "with the cargo of good, lawful order and prosperity of utmost wealth".⁴⁷ There are numerous dedications honouring Augustus as the 'Zeus, the Deliverer'.⁴⁸ Since the epithet 'Zeus, the Deliverer' is especially well attested in Egypt, it was probably spread by official sources in the new Roman province along the Nile. That this appellation indeed refers to the liberation of Egypt from the Ptolemies is proven by the phrase 'Caesar, son of god, great god, who has liberated, may he live eternally' in Demotic documents. It corresponds with the Greek expression 'Son of god, Zeus Eleutherios, Augustus'.⁴⁹ In a similar way, the Egyptian priests adopted the epithet also for the pharaonic titles of Augustus: The *princeps* is the one who "entered Egypt in satisfaction, the army and the gods and goddesses of Egypt are in jubilation and he takes possession (of it) like Re, who shines on the horizon".⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Cass. Dio LI 17,6–7.

⁴⁷ Suppl.Hell. 982,7: εὐνομή[ι]ης φόρτοισι καὶ εὐθηνίης βαθυπλούτου; cf. Koenen and Thompson 1984, 127; Geraci 1983, 154: "(la identificazione con Ζεὺς ἐλευθέριος) potrà alludere semmai alla liberazione dalla dinastia lagide". Of the same opinion with reference to Cass. Dio LI 15,1 (the rule of Cleopatra and Antonius was fatal for Egypt) already Blumenthal 1913, 330.

⁴⁸ Cf. the compilation of the evidence by Bernand 1969, 80. *W.Chr.* 111,1–3: Ὅμνυ[μι Καίσαρα] Αὐτοκράτορα θεοῦ υἱὸν] Δία Ἐλευθέριον [Σεβαστόν]; cf. Balconi 1976, 214; Packman 1991, 92; for the oath: Seidl 1933, 10–11; 18–20; 68; cf. also the oath P.Oslo II 26,38–39: καὶ ὁμνύωι Καίσαρ<α> Αὐτοκράτορα θεοῦ υἱὸν Δία Ἐλευθέριον Σεβαστ[όν], similar also the oath P.Amst. I 27: ὁμνύω Καίσαρα Αὐτοκράτορα θεοῦ υἱὸν Δί[α] Ἐλευθέριον Σεβαστόν; *CPR* I 224,1–2; P.Rein. II 99,2–4. It seems that the cult title was given to him already by the Greek cities of the East: cf. *BCH* XI 1887, 306, no. 1,7 = Smallwood 1967, no. 135 = McCabe, *Hyllarmia* 17 (postum): τῆς πόλεως Διὸς Ἐλευθερίου, with the remark by Dittenberger, *OGIS* II 457, n. 1; Guarducci, *EG* III 109–110; *IG* XII 2, 156 (Lesbos).

⁴⁹ Felber 1991, 30, cites as examples the graffito Kharga 1 and the *stelae* BM 184 and 188 (= *stelae* Memphis 29 and 26): *Gsr* p³ ntr šr p³ ntr p³ ntr c³ j.jr jr rmt-mnh^c nh dt.

⁵⁰ Grenier 1989, 97; Grenier 1987, 94: c³k=f T³-mrj hrw jb mnfj.t m h^{cc}.wt ntr.w ntr.wt jfj.n=f m shm=f mj R^c psd m ih.t; for slightly different translation see De Wit 1961, 63.

In this context it is particularly telling that Diospolis Megale (Thebes) counts among the cities conquered by Gallus—ancient Thebes, the former religious centre of Egypt with its enormous temple complexes. Exactly here at the temple of Karnak, in front of the first pylon,⁵¹ at the entrance to the temple, one of three archaeologically attested shrines for the Imperial cult in Egypt were found (besides Philae and Alexandria). Two statues of Augustus with the *epiklesis* ‘Zeus, the Deliverer’ were erected in this sanctuary for the Imperial cult, which forcefully emphasise the liberation aspect for the former rebels.

According to Octavian’s/Augustus’ propaganda of the country’s liberation from the Ptolemies therefore marked the beginning of a new era, called *kratesis*. Indigenous revolts did not fit into this concept and reports about them on public monuments in Egypt even less so. The beginning of Octavian’s rule was supposed to be regarded as a new age of fortune, prosperity, and the return of order. Therefore, the Gallus stela—understood as a victory monument of the Roman prefect—was contradicting Octavian’s proclamations for Egypt in some ways. By using his victories and its proclamation to highlight his own military prowess, Gallus overlooked a decisive point of Octavian’s propaganda.

3.2 *The Reorganisation of the Triakontaschoinos*

After pacifying the Thebais, Gallus reports on the conquest of Lower Nubia—i.e. the *Triakontaschoinos* or ‘Thirty-mile land’—without a struggle. The prefect then performed two important political actions on the Nile island Philae at the Egyptian border: First, he reorganised the *Triakontaschoinos*, and second, he initiated external relations with Teriteqas,⁵² the King of Meroe, i.e. the Ethiopians. Several questions arise: What exactly was the target of his actions beyond the border? Did Gallus overstep with them his competence as prefect of Egypt or did he act on behalf and by the order of Octavian? Finally, one has to consider that there was no precedent or tradition for Gallus’ position, with which he could have complied. Let us therefore look at the second part of the text in both versions: line 7–8 of the Latin text, which corresponds with line 16–18 of the Greek version.

⁵¹ Herklotz 2007, 272–273.

⁵² Hintze 1959, 25–26.

[l]eg[at]is Aethiopum ad Philas auditis, eoq[ue] rege in tutelam recepto, tyran[n]o Tr[iacontas]choen[i] inde Aethiopiae constituto

after envoys of the king of the Ethiopians were heard near Philae and after this (8) king was received into custody, after a tyrant of the *Triacontaschoenus* of Ethiopia from there on was established

δεξάμενός τε πρέσβεις Αιθιοπίων ἐν Φίλαις καὶ προξενίαν παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως λ[αβών τυ]ραννόν τε τῆς Τριακοντασχοίνου τοπαρχία[ς] μίᾳς ἐν Αἰθιοπίαι καταστήσας

he received envoys of the Ethiopians in Philae and received the *proxenia* from the king and he had inaugurated a tyrant over the toparchy 'Thirty-mile land' in Ethiopia

The Relationship with the Meroitic King

According to Alföldy, the Latin text clearly indicates that Gallus put the king of the Ethiopians under the protection of Rome. The kingdom of Meroe thus fell under Roman sovereignty.⁵³ Locher, who deals extensively with the history of the cataract region, doubts the truthfulness of Gallus' account, assuming that they simply exchanged diplomatic courtesies in the hope for amicable relations between the two states.⁵⁴

Taken literally, however, the Latin text supports neither Alföldy's nor Locher's interpretation. By sending the embassy to Gallus, the Meroitic king made himself Gallus' *cliens*. This is the literary meaning of *recipere in tutelam*, a term from Roman civil law that cannot be understood in any other way. The Latin uses here a specific *terminus technicus* known to any Roman, which was—especially of this time—of significance in external affairs. Therefore, it seems appropriate to take the text literally. Without a struggle, Gallus had conquered the *Triakontaschoinos*, an area of the Meroitic kingdom, and the king had not only accepted the Roman annexation of a part of his kingdom, but had—in our opinion—also established a personal and close relationship with Gallus because of the military supremacy of the Roman legions. Gallus held the position of a *patronus* in this relationship and the king took the role of a *cliens*. Whether the king received the

⁵³ Alföldy 1990, 99; cf. Mommsen 1905, 453; Török 1996, 693; for the meaning of the term *tutela* see Braund 1984, 146.

⁵⁴ Locher 2002, 94, especially n. 55; Stickler 2002, 98–99, is also of similar opinion: Meroe's relation to Rome is in any case better described by the term *tutela* than προξενία.

amicitia populi Romani though, as suggested by Alföldy, seems rather doubtful since there is no reference to it in the text. A recognition of the king as *amicus et socius populi Romani* would have warranted a resolution of the Senate. In our opinion, the ruler of Meroe was the personal *amicus* or *cliens* of Gallus.

As for the Greek version, Friedhelm Hoffmann has demonstrated that the Greek text is a somewhat erroneous translation of the Latin version.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the phrasing of the Greek text is revealing. The word *προξενία* used here meant for Greeks first of all 'hospitality' in a general sense. Since the classical Greek period, the *proxenos* had politically been the representative of a foreign community among his own people, therefore a *Staatsgastfreund* or honorary consul.⁵⁶ The *proxenia*, granted mostly to major benefactors from a foreign city or country, was a very special honour. In regard to the events on Philae, it would mean that the mediators brought with them a document of the *proxenos*-declaration for Gallus.⁵⁷ The prefect would thus have become a *proxenos* of the Meroitic king. Whether this is possible and—more important—in agreement with the Latin version, is debated among scholars. Most of them concur that there is a distinct difference between *tutela* and *προξενία*.⁵⁸ Only Treu assumes that the translation of *tutela* as *προξενία* is "terminologically correct", however without giving any further explanations.⁵⁹

In our opinion, there is indeed a possibility to regard *tutela* and *προξενία* as two sides of the same medal, especially when considering the semantic context of the word *tutela* in this period. Besides *tutela*, two key terms are used in the sources almost synonymously: *amicitia*⁶⁰ and *hospitium*. They describe, for example, the relationship between Pompeius and Ptolemaios XII Neos Dionysos.⁶¹ Heinen notes that in the Late Republican *hospitium* as well as *amicitia* do not describe anymore a relationship between equals in external affairs, but between superiors and subordinates, thus aligning it with the *cliens*–*patronus*

⁵⁵ See F. Hoffmann's article in the volume.

⁵⁶ For *proxenia* see Marek 1984.

⁵⁷ Cf. Preisigke 1924, II: 4, s.v. λαμβάνω: to receive, accept, obtain documents.

⁵⁸ Cf. Bernard 1969, 44; Burstein 1995, 167; Hendrickx 1991, 57–58; Costabile 2001, 317; Stickler 2002, 79.

⁵⁹ Treu 1973, 225–226.

⁶⁰ Demicheli 1976, 72, n. 15.

⁶¹ Caes. bell. civ. III 103,3: *pro hospitio atque amicitia*; see also Lucan. IX 131 and 1028.

relationship.⁶² The statement that Gallus received the *proxenia* from the Meroitic king therefore means that Gallus became the patron of the king. This way, it would provide the same explanation as the Latin text. Therefore, under constitutional law, the Greek term *προξενία* accounts as a (sugarcoated) *terminus technicus* for a substantial part of the tutelary relationship established by Gallus.⁶³

That the *proxenia* received by Gallus in this context only means that the Meroitic king became his *cliens* is indirectly supported by inscriptions from the Greek East.⁶⁴ There, one can observe that the phrase *εὐεργέτης καὶ πάτρων* can be substituted with *εὐεργέτης καὶ πρόξευος*—high-ranking Romans from Greek cities were named *proxenoi* and the word *proxenos* constitutes a kind of synonym for *patron*.⁶⁵ In turn, the patron⁶⁶ in these inscriptions was the Roman official, with whom the city established a tutelary relationship.

The result of Gallus' first legal action on Philae would therefore be Meroe's transformation into a personal client kingdom.

The Appointment of a Tyrant in Lower Nubia

Let us now turn to the second legal act of the prefect, the appointment of a tyrant for the 'Thirty-mile land'. The geographical term *Triakontaschoinos* first appears around 150 BC in an inscription of the Ptolemaic official Boethos. The territory between the first and the second cataract gained by him for the Ptolemaic kingdom is called 'Thirty-mile land'.⁶⁷ The status of the *Triakontaschoinos* under constitutional law after the conquest by Gallus and his appointment of a tyrant are highly disputed among scholars. Three different interpretations are being considered:

⁶² Heinen 1966, 11.

⁶³ Coşkun 2005, 8, points out that the terms *clientela* and *amicitia* not necessarily contradict each other. It should be stated that asymmetrical social positions neither in Rome nor in the present excluded the existence of 'friendship'; likewise, an imbalance of power entitles one to speak of a relation similar to a client and an obvious dependence on a client relationship.

⁶⁴ Demicheli 1976, 72, n. 15.

⁶⁵ Bowersock 1965, 12–13.

⁶⁶ For the relation between the patron and Greek cities see Coşkun 2005, 7, n. 28 (with a bibliography).

⁶⁷ Bernand 1989, no. 302,10; for a further bibliography see Huß 2001, 580–582.

1. Stickler thinks that Gallus created a 'buffer state' or 'client border state' between Egypt and the kingdom of Meroe.⁶⁸ Therefore, Gallus would have founded a new state.
2. Hölbl is of the opinion that Lower Nubia "constitutionally remained with the Meroitic realm."⁶⁹ Thus, he considers it to "make little sense ... to tell a reader in the region of Elephantine and Philae that the territory beyond the cataract geographically is not Egypt anymore but Ethiopia (= Nubia)".⁷⁰
3. Other scholars presume that a topographical entity was created, which belonged to the Roman state but retained some local autonomy.⁷¹ However, they do not give specific reasons for this assumption.

A closer look at the literary sources and the text of the Gallus stela confirm the third opinion. The *Triakontaschoinos* was in all likelihood part of the province *Aegyptus*, a supposition based on the following evidence:

1. The Egyptian border has always been located at the First Cataract. The territory south of it was never called Egypt, even when it was part of the pharaonic or Ptolemaic realm.⁷²
2. The Roman hegemony of the *Triakontaschoinos* was lost a few years later, but a part of this region, the *Dodekaschoinos* or 'Twelve-mile land' between Philae and Maharraqa (Hierasykaminos) remained with the province *Aegyptus*. In the first century AD, the *strategoï* of this region were mostly of local Meroitic descent, as indicated by their names.⁷³ The 'tyrant' instated by Gallus was probably a native as well, as the title 'tyrant' is only known in this region. Also, the Romans would have refrained from given someone of their own ranks the official title *tyrannus*. Thus, it is administratively and historically unproblematic to regard the 'Thirty-mile land' as part of the province *Aegyptus*.
3. The assumption that Gallus had created the *Triakontaschoinos* as a client state is contradicted by the lack of a separate designation for

⁶⁸ Stickler 2002, 81; similarly also Hendrickx 1991, 57; Kormysheva 1989, 305, even assumes that as a result of negotiations with Gallus the *Triakontaschoinos* was not incorporated in the Roman Empire.

⁶⁹ Hölbl 2000, 14.

⁷⁰ Hölbl 2004, 16.

⁷¹ Cf. Locher 2002, 94; Costabile 2001, 317.

⁷² Cf. Bernand 1969, no. 158 I 1: "Ἠλθομεν Αἰγύπτιοι πέρας."

⁷³ Cf. Török 1979, 95.

the 'Thirty-mile land'; instead, the old administrative term *Triakontaschoinos* was used.

It is thus hardly possible to see the 'Thirty-mile land' as client state founded by Rome, respectively Gallus. Therefore, the only plausible solution remaining is to identify the *Triakontaschoinos* as a new, southernmost territory of the province *Aegyptus*, probably administered by a local ruler. After all, the Romans entrusted the Greek cities of the *Imperium* to their own administration in the same way. The prefect saved himself and Rome from having to build up a costly administrative structure in Lower Nubia.

Ultimately, Gallus had thus used his authority over the province *Aegyptus*—to which the *Triakontaschoinos* belonged because of the previous conquest—to instate a representative who answered to him directly. The remaining kingdom of Meroe, however, whose weak position was underscored by the conquest without any resistance, was under protection of Gallus since the year 29 BC.

The establishment of the tutelary relationship as well as the appointment of the 'tyrant' resulted from by the military pressure on Meroe. The Meroitic king presumably considered the annexation of the *Triakontaschoinos* as intolerable. No sooner the second prefect of Egypt, Aelius Gallus, had left the country with a large part of the army,⁷⁴ the Ethiopians invaded Egypt in 24 BC and occupied Syene, Philae, and Elephantine.⁷⁵ An important political event had taken place earlier: The prefect had changed. The Ethiopians obviously did not feel bound anymore by the personal tutelary relationship established between Gallus and their former king.

Already a year after the Meroitic devastations, the Romans responded: The prefect C. Petronius re-conquered the *Triakontaschoinos* up to Primis (Qasr Ibrim) and destroyed the capital of Meroe, Napata, as punishment.⁷⁶ However, the Romans seemed not to have been able to retain the territory for a longer period of time.⁷⁷ In the year 21/20 BC, the peace treaty of Samos was negotiated between the two realms, and Hierasykaminos (Maharraqa), the southernmost place in the

⁷⁴ Strabo XVI 4,22; cf. Kienast 1999, 335, n. 60 (with a bibliography).

⁷⁵ See detailed Locher 2002, who assumes that the uprising against Rome was at first only local.

⁷⁶ Strabo XVII 1,54; Pliny, N.h. 6,181–182; Cass. Dio LIV 5,4–6; Augustus, Res Gestae 26,5.

⁷⁷ Horton 1993, 273.

Dodekaschoinos was established as the border. Afterwards, the southern region of the *Imperium* remained quiet.⁷⁸

The Questions of Authority

After clarifying Gallus' actions under constitutional law, the question remains to what extent these actions lay—in regard to foreign affairs—within the authority of the Egyptian prefect. In respect to internal affairs, especially the fact that Gallus had established a personal client relationship with the Meroitic king is very problematic. By law, only the Senate was entitled to enter an agreement with a foreign power—even during the principate. The treaty was normally suggested to the Senate by a consul and then formally agreed by the Senate. A contract was therefore only legal if sanctioned by a resolution of the Senate and the populace in Rome. For this purpose, the foreign emissaries contacted the consul who then arranged an audience with the Senate. In the time of Gallus, this is illustrated by the example of Mytilene. This city wanted to form an alliance with Rome, which was then ratified by the Senate.⁷⁹ Similarly, in 26 BC the Senate accepted King Polemon of Pontos as clientele king and he was included in the register of friends and allies.⁸⁰ There is no evidence that this happened with the Meroitic king as well. Therefore, we assume that the contract between Gallus and the king was not legally binding for Rome. The prefect conducted external affairs without authorization by the Senate and ultimately also by Octavian. However, in the transition period from the republic to the principate there were no clear rules, so it seems that Gallus might have assumed he had the right to do this.

How much the first prefect had monopolized and focused the relations between Rome and Meroe on his person is possibly highlighted by the above mentioned events of the year 24 BC. Strabo notes that the prefect Petronius had surrounded Napata as retribution for the invasion of Egypt. The Queen then sent envoys to negotiate a peace treaty (φιλία) with him.⁸¹ Petronius, however, ignored them and destroyed the city. During the later counterstroke of the Ethiopians, new negotiations were pursued and Strabo continues: “when emissaries came, he [scil. the prefect] told them to negotiate with Caesar, and they said,

⁷⁸ See also Cassius Dio LIV 4–5; Pliny, N.h. 6,181–182.

⁷⁹ Ehrenberg and Jones 1955, no. 307.

⁸⁰ Cassius Dio LIII 25,1; cf. Bringmann 2007, 133–134.

⁸¹ Strabo XVII 1,54,28.

they would not know who Caesar is.” In Strabo’s description it seems that the Ethiopians had no idea that the commander of the Roman troops only acted on behalf of a much higher authority—for the ruler of the enemies was the Roman prefect. This can, however, only have happened because the first contact between Meroe and Rome was dominated by Cornelius Gallus who seemingly had had no interest in informing the Ethiopians about the true nature of the legal circumstances, or he just did not care. This seems to be further evidence for the assumption that Gallus had established a private tutelary alliance with the Meroitic king.

A second legal problem is caused by Gallus’ actions. He led his army beyond Egypt’s borders, which means beyond the authority of his *provincia* without mentioning an order or assignment for this action from Octavian. The transgression of his *provincia* was by no means a light offence, even if it benefited Rome. This can be shown by the case of the proconsul of the province Macedonia, Marcus Primus who waged war without authorization against the Odryses in Thrace.⁸² Since Macedonia was a senatorial province the Senate indicted him in 22 BC. The proconsul then claimed to have acted on orders from Augustus who contradicted this in court. Because Egypt was no senatorial province but under the direct authority of Augustus, who endowed his representative with extensive powers, the possibility remains that Gallus acted in a legal grey area when he added the “Thirty-mile land” to the province. Historically, the prefect could legitimize his actions by claiming that Lower Nubia had been part of the Ptolemaic realm. Therefore, he had only restituted old territorial claims remaining within his *provincia*. In particular, the use of the old administrative name *Triakontaschoinos* for Lower Nubia supports this assumption. On the other hand, Gallus contrasts such a moderate claim with his victory stela, when he states—in contradiction to history—that no kings before him had set foot on this territory.

Assessment of the Classical Inscriptions of the Gallus Stela

Let us now return to the question how to assess the victory stela in regard to the accusations against Gallus in Rome. Cassius Dio and Suetonius listed the prefect’s lack of respect for Augustus and the excessive pursuit of glory. Especially, the publication of his deeds, allegedly even on the pyramids, was stressed. The Gallus stela is of

⁸² Cassius Dio LVI 3,2–3.

course not a pyramid, but on his victory monument in Philae Gallus praises himself and emphasises his deeds. To publicise his fame, he even disregarded an important directive of Augustan propaganda: He reports about revolts in Upper Egypt and how he ended them. The foreign politics of the prefect were also highly problematic, even if he acted in a legal grey area; he had annexed a territory to the south of Egypt, put it under indigenous administration and established a personal patron relationship with a foreign king. In the description of both cases, no authorization by Augustus or the Roman Senate is mentioned.

However, we do not ultimately assume that the erection of the victory stela in 29 BC was directly related to the withdrawal of Gallus from Egypt. After all, the prefect stayed in office until 27 BC, that is for more than two further years. Therefore, it seems rather likely that Gallus believed he was not overstepping Octavian's directives and acted in Rome's interest, but that he could pursue his own glory at the same time. On the stela, Gallus states his own legitimization already in the first words of the Greek and Latin inscription: He relates all his actions to Octavian. According to both texts, it was Octavian who defeated the Ptolemies and instated Gallus as prefect. Gallus' own deeds are indeed grandiose, but not comparable to Octavian's. Therefore, it seems possible that the prefect had carried out at least his military actions—crushing the Upper Egyptian revolt and re-conquering the *Triakontaschoinos*—under Augustus' order. The clientele alliance, however, seems hardly compatible with Octavian's instructions.

We can assume that Octavian was only informed about the addition of another territory to the province, which in fact had always belonged to the Ptolemaic realm. Octavian learned that Gallus had established a good relationship with the neighbouring Meroitic kingdom. Only this last point can explain—at least in our opinion—why Gallus has been recalled only two years later. The *princeps* will have hardly heard about the exaggerated account of his deeds on the victory stela either. Only later, after Octavian had been notified about Gallus' numerous minor and major misconducts against his *maiestas*, the prosecutors probably drew on his questionable conduct in regard to constitutional laws, and especially on his almost ruler like self-presentation to be able to convict him. In this respect it should be mentioned that in the hieroglyphic text Gallus is praised with royal epithets, but this might be excused since the Egyptians priests did not know how to deal with a prefect and his status.

To summarize, there are two reasons for the prefect's ultimate suicide. Augustus recalled Gallus from the province since the prefect increasingly behaved like an absolute ruler without clearly stressing Augustus' sovereignty. The Senate was already indignant early on since a princeps' friend carried out foreign affairs without senatorial legitimization. When Augustus dropped Gallus a double meaning was attached to handing him over to the Senate for indictment. On one hand, Augustus proved that he entirely respected the Senate's authority and intended to do so in the future. This seemed to comply with his re-establishment of the Republic, which happened in the same year. On the other hand, he was not forced to punish his friend and former prefect for his hubris himself. This could have provoked accusations from his adversaries that he fostered *invidia* towards Gallus. In turn, the Senate convicted the prefect not for his hubris but for his disregard of Roman practices concerning external affairs. This did not warrant the death penalty, but loss of fortune and banishment, which meant the complete defamation of Augustus' former important friend.

4. Conclusion

Gallus' deeds and actions were commemorated by erecting a trilingual stela in the temple complex of Philae. He chose for himself the appearance of a Hellenistic horseman conquering a barbaric enemy. Gallus did not try to assume royal prerogatives by being named as a pharaoh, as assumed by Bresciani. However, the prefect is praised in the hieroglyphic inscription with royal epithets usually reserved for the pharaoh in historical Egyptian stela. One has to bear in mind, however, that the position of a prefect had just been created, and Octavian, the real sovereign behind Gallus, was not even a king. It must have been difficult for the Egyptian priests in Philae to rank Gallus properly, much in the same way as about 300 years ago, when Ptolemaios, son of Lagos ruled Egypt as Satrap for Alexander II (IV).

Gallus' main offence seems to have been his powerful position in Egypt—obviously too powerful for the Senate—combined with the hubris against Octavian/Augustus. Although all the measures taken by Gallus probably remained, from the Roman point of view, within his powers of command, one has to bear in mind that Augustus had only just established his autarchy. Gallus was imprudent enough to praise his own deeds. In making them public, he even disregarded an impor-

tant directive of Augustan propaganda: Octavian preferred being regarded as a liberator from the Ptolemaic reign. And although indigenous uprisings did not fit into this concept, Gallus reports about them in his victory monument.

The prefect's foreign politics were likewise risky. By annexing the *Triakontaschoinos* and by establishing a personal patron relationship with a foreign king Gallus became very powerful. When he started erecting a stela and other monuments commemorating or even boasting of his victories, as mentioned by Cassius Dio and exemplified by our stela from Philae, he was removed by Augustus. The higher-ranking Roman senators, themselves barred from the wealthy imperial province as potential rivals to the emperor, were only too willing to oblige Augustus and ordered an inquiry, stripped him of his fortune and banished the first prefect of Egypt. Gallus' pride left him no other choice but to commit suicide. The subsequent placement of his stela in the foundation of the temple of Augustus should not be misunderstood as *damnatio memoriae*, but as a simple re-use of an out-dated monument no longer needed—a common practice in Egypt and attested by the gateway at Kalabsha for the time of Octavian.

The Gallus stela is not only a crucial source for Gallus and for the period when Roman rule was established in Egypt in general, but also for Octavian's position, especially in the eyes of the indigenous priests in the first cataract region. Their attitude is obviously different from the one demonstrated by the priests in the Theban area. There, the native priests could not bring themselves to enclose Octavian's name *Kaisaros* in a royal cartouche, as attested on a Buchis stela that dates to 17 April 29 BC, that is one day after the Gallus stela. This fact Goldbrunner incorrectly explains with the lack of Octavian's final titulary in the first years of Roman rule in Egypt.⁸³ The Kalabsha-gateway and the Gallus stela, however, prove that it was indeed possible to write Octavian's name in a cartouche at exactly that time.⁸⁴ A possible explanation for the absent cartouche on the Buchis stela could rather be that the priests in Hermonthis did not want to recognize Octavian as the cultic relevant pharaoh after his general Gallus had just crushed their uprising because of the harsh taxation. In contrast, Octavian was obviously recognized as pharaoh in the cataract region where the

⁸³ Mond and Myers 1934, II: 11–13; III: no. 13, pl. 43–43A. Goldbrunner 2004, 64–71, no. 13, pl. 7.

⁸⁴ Hölbl 1996, 101.

temple building programmes were supported from his first year onwards. However, considering these different representations of the new ruler one should also take into account that Octavian refused the role of pharaoh (or king in general) in the Roman propaganda.⁸⁵

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⁸⁵ See Pfeiffer 2009.

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