

Book XI.
Title XXIX. (XXVIII)

Concerning the Primates of Alexandria.
(De Alexandriae primatibus.)

11.29.1. Emperors Theodosius and Valentinian to Isadorus, Praetorian Prefect.

We exempt the public labor associations (corporati) of the City of Alexandria from the burden of cleansing the stream, and approving the order made by you, decree that 400 solidi from the two-penny tax of said city shall be assigned for that purpose, to be repaid out of the ship tax (export, import).

Given at Constantinople June 4 (436).

C. Th. 14.27.2.

Note.

This law appears to deal primarily with the cleansing of the Nile, or, as Gothofredus thinks, with the cleansing of the outlets from the Nile which irrigated the lands of Egypt. The corporati here mentioned, who were exempted from cleansing these outlets, were, according to Gothofredus, the same class of public labor associations which are mentioned at C. 11. 15. 1, and note, such as bakers, purveyors of swine etc. Mathias Gelzer in his Studien z. Byz. Verwaltung 18 note 2, while agreeing that the association here mentioned belonged to the urban plebeians, thinks that reference is here rather made to the association or guild organized for military and political purposes - police duties. In this connection it may be noted that Augustus employed soldiers for such purpose. Suet. Aug. 18. The city of Alexandria was directed to advance money for this purpose from its two-penny (dinnunio) tax, the amount of which should be repaid by the state from the import and export tax. The two-penny tax probably was an import tax or import and export tax levied in addition to the state tax. Speaking in part of the imports into Alexandria and the import and export tax, Strabo 17.13, says as follows: "For formerly (under the Ptolomies) not even 20 vessels ventured to navigate the Arabian gulf, or advance to the smallest distance beyond the straits at its mouth; but now large fleets are dispatched as far as India and the extremities of Ethiopia, from which places the most valuable freights are brought to Egypt, and are thence exported to other parts, so that a double amount of custom is collected, arising from imports on the one hand, and from exports on the other. The most expensive description of goods is charged with the heaviest impost, for in fact Alexandria has a monopoly of trade, and is almost the only receptacle for this kind of merchandise and place of supply for foreigners." The Nile is mentioned also at C. 9.38 and C. 7.41.