

## Latin Inscriptions of the Legio VI Ferrata from Legio / Lajjun and its Vicinity

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*Abstract:* Although only fragments of new Latin inscriptions were found in and around the legionary base of Legio they are more or less representative of the life of a Roman legion as far as it was voiced by inscriptions — here in the province of Syria Palaestina as in other provinces. Some of the inscriptions were found inside the legionary base, others in different places in the vicinity outside the military base. We can suppose that these sites were connected with the legion, perhaps even organized and managed by the legionaries and maybe even “families” of the soldiers at the nearby civilian Jewish-Samaritan village of Kefar ‘Othnay. That two of the inscriptions are dedications to deities of the Roman pantheon is not surprising. Most military people were aware that their life needed the protection of the gods, maybe even more than the life of civilians.

*Keywords:* Legio-Lajjun; Kefar ‘Othnay; Roman military base; Legio VI Ferrata; province of Syria Palaestina; Latin Inscriptions

Writing played a large role in Rome’s public and private life. The same applied to the Roman military, perhaps even more so than to normal public life. The military administration was based everywhere on written documents,<sup>1</sup> as not only the countless papyri from Egypt show,<sup>2</sup> but now also e.g. the Ostraca of Bu Njem in Africa<sup>3</sup> or the writing tablets from Vindolanda.<sup>4</sup> However, writing not only played a decisive role in the inner life of the army, it also played an important role in the daily life of the soldiers. The camps of the Roman troops were in many respects very similar to the urban centres of the cities of the Empire, with their streets, buildings, funerary districts and places of worship not only of the Roman gods, but also of the divinities which the soldiers encountered in the direct environment of their camps or the wider regions.<sup>5</sup> The epigraphic culture which was quite natural for Romans — as well as Greeks — and which was connected with all urban, but partly also with rural centres, was no less

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<sup>1</sup> K. Stauner, *Das offizielle Schriftwesen des römischen Heeres von Augustus bis Gallienus (27 v. Chr.–268 n. Chr.). Eine Untersuchung zu Struktur, Funktion und Bedeutung der offiziellen militärischen Verwaltungsdokumentation und zu deren Schreibern*, Bonn 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Robert O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, Oxford 1971.

<sup>3</sup> R. Marichal, *Les Ostraca de Bu Njem*, Tripoli 1992.

<sup>4</sup> A. K. Bowman – D. Thomas, *Vindolanda. The Latin writing tablets*, London 1983; iid, *The Vindolanda Writing Tablets (tabulae Vindolandenses II)*, London 1994; iid, *The Vindolanda writing-tablets. (= tabulae Vindolandenses III)*, London 2003; <http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/>.

<sup>5</sup> See for example. O. Stoll, *Zwischen Integration und Abgrenzung: Die Religion des römischen Heeres im Nahen Osten: Studien zum Verhältnis von Armee und Zivilbevölkerung im römischen Syrien und den Nachbargebieten*, St. Katharinen 2001.

evident in the centres of the Roman army, the bases of the legions and in the forts of the auxiliary troops. The Roman province of Iudaea was no exception in this respect; it corresponded essentially to what we know from other provinces. The same can be shown for Jerusalem, where since Vespasian the legio X Fretensis had its camp, even if we have only relatively few Latin testimonies. Consecrations to deities such as Jupiter Serapis or the Genius of Africa,<sup>6</sup> inscriptions on buildings erected by the Legion,<sup>7</sup> honorary statues dedicated by soldiers<sup>8</sup> or funerary monuments with their accompanying texts for members of the army bear witness to this.<sup>9</sup>

Since the time of Traian the province of Iudaea had received a second legion, first the legio II Traiana, perhaps already since about 108 A.D.,<sup>10</sup> replaced in the last years of Hadrian by the legio VI Ferrata. Probably from the beginning this second legion was stationed in the north of the province at the western descent to the Jesreel plain, between Gaba and Ginae. The place later took the name Legio and from the Islamic Period (7<sup>th</sup> c.) the name Lajjun. But in the first decades of the stationing of legio VI Ferrata it was still called Caparcotna (according the name of the Jewish village — Kefar ‘Othnay)<sup>11</sup> by the Romans, as the place appears in several inscriptions of the senatorial legionary tribune Gaius Novius Rusticus Venuleius Apronianus from Antioch in Pisidia.<sup>12</sup>

For a long time the exact location of the legionary Base and the town of Maximianopolis, which developed from it at the beginning of the 4th century, was not known. We also had very few Latin inscriptions, which are otherwise quite natural for a Roman camp. In volume III of the *CIL*, which also recorded the inscriptions of the province Iudaea, not a single text from this place is recorded, and it covered up to the year 1948, when Avi-Yonah published the first Latin inscription with the consecration of a statue of the god Serapis.<sup>13</sup> More than half a century later an altar for the Roman

<sup>6</sup> *CIIP* I 2, 205. 706; see also 707, a dedication by one or two members of the legio X Fretensis.

<sup>7</sup> *CIIP* I 2, 712. 715 = H.M. Cotton and A. Ecker, Reflections on the Foundation of Aelia Capitolina, in *Festschrift for Guido Clemente* (in print); 717. 722-727.

<sup>8</sup> *CIIP* I 2, 721.

<sup>9</sup> *CIIP* I 2, 732. 734. 735. 736. Probably the persons, who are mentioned in 744 and 745, are members of the army.

<sup>10</sup> For this aspect see once more W. Eck, The Extraordinary Roman Military Presence in Iudaea from 70 AD until the Third Century (Congress Haifa 2017 — in print).

<sup>11</sup> The site name mentioned in the Mishna (late 2nd c.) as the southern Halakhic boundary of Jewish Galilee (Mishna, Gittin 7:7). For further reading on the sites, see: Y. Tepper, Lajjun — Legio in Israel: Results of a survey in and around the military camp area, in: Ph. Freman — P. Bennett — J. Zbigniew — T. Fiema — B. Hoffmann (eds.), *Limes XVIII. Proceedings of the XVII<sup>th</sup> International congress of Roman frontier studies, Amman, September 2000*, Oxford 2002, 231-242; Y. Tepper, The Roman Legionary Camp at Legio, Israel: Results of an Archaeological Survey and Observations on the Roman Military Presence at the Site, in: A.S. Lewin — P. Pellegrini (eds.), *The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest*, Oxford, 2007, 57-71.

<sup>12</sup> *CIL* III 6814-6816; *AE* 1920, 78; *ZPE* 44, 1981, 96.

<sup>13</sup> M. Avi-Yonah, Newly Discovered Latin and Greek Inscriptions, *QDAP* 12, 1946, 89 = *AE* 1948, 145.

god Silvanus was found,<sup>14</sup> as well as a brick stamp for legio II Traiana and legio VI Ferrata.<sup>15</sup>

Yotam Tepper's research, which is going on for almost a decade and a half now and which eventually led to large-scale surveys and excavations, has slightly changed the situation of the epigraphic evidence.<sup>16</sup> Now epigraphic evidence has also been found from the immediate area of the base, which allows us to recognize a little more about the inscriptional culture there in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, even if the individual fragments as such do not reveal too much. But each fragment refers to an originally complete inscription. Especially where the epigraphic tradition is still very thin, each fragment brings a small enrichment.

Before the new fragments are presented, the texts, which have been known for some time now and whose content and overall structure is clear, should be briefly presented once again.<sup>17</sup> The first two were surface finds; No. 1 below, was found in the ruins of H. Muzzav (Kh. el Khazana) 1.5 km. north-east from the legionary base; No. 2. at 'Ein el Qubbe ('Ein Megiddo), 1 km. north of the base. The last two were found during the IAA Excavation at the Jewish-Samaritan village of Kefar 'Othnay, about 0.5 km. south of the base.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> W. Eck – Y. Tepper, A Dedication to Silvanus near the Camp of the legio VI Ferrata near Lajjun, *SCI* 20, 2001, 85 ff. = *AE* 2001, 1967. Y. Tepper, A roman period altar from Legio, *'Atiqot* 89, 2018, 141\*-145\*; 125 (English summary).

<sup>15</sup> *AE* 2007, 1627a and b; see also Y. Tepper, Roof tiles and bricks bearing Roman legionary stamps from Legio, *'Atiqot* 89, 2018, 133\*-140\* (Hebrew); 123-124 (English summary).

<sup>16</sup> See summarizing R.S. Homsher – Y. Tepper – B.L. Drake – M.J. Adams – J. David, From the Bronze Age to the "Lead Age": Observations on sediment analyses at two archaeological sites in the Jezreel Valley, Israel, in: *Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry* 16, No 1, 2016, 203 ff.; Y. Tepper – J. David – M. J. Adams, The Roman VIth Legion Ferrata at Legio (el-Lajjun), Israel: Preliminary Report of the 2013 Excavation, in: *Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 34, 2016, 91 ff.; Y. Tepper, The Roman Legionary Base in Legio-Kefar 'Othnay — The Evidence from the Small Finds, in: M. Finkelberg, J. Price and Y. Shahar, *Rome: An Empire of Many Nations* (in print).

<sup>17</sup> Not included are inscriptions of the *legio VI Ferrata* found some distance from Lajjun, such as a building inscription near Tel Shalem (N. Tzori, *IEJ* 21, 1971, 53f.) or the building inscription of the legion in Hammat Gader (W. Eck, Die römische Armee und der Ausbau der heißen Bäder von Hammat Gader, in: *When West Met East. The Encounter of Greece and Rome with the Jews, Egyptians, and Others*. Studies Presented to Ranon Katzoff in Honor of his 75th Birthday, ed. by D.M. Schaps – U. Yiftach – D. Dueck, Trieste 2016, 117 ff. = *AE* 2015, 1678). We will also not include tile stamps which have been found at the site (excavation and survey); they will be discussed separately.

<sup>18</sup> For further reading see: Y. Tepper – L. Di Segni, *A Christian Prayer Hall of the third century CE at Kefar 'Othnay (Legio). Excavations at the Megiddo Prison 2005*. IAA. 2006 (license A-4411/2005); For a different approach, see Chr. Marksches, Was lernen wir über das frühe Christentum aus der Archäologie des Heiligen Landes?, in: *ZAC* 11, 2008, 421-447.

### I. Inscriptions published for some time

1. The inscription is written on a cylindrical basis (not an altar as is stated in most publications) made of white-yellow marble with a molded base and top (fig. 1). On the top surface appears a hemispherical cavity (Ø ca. 28 cm), 8 cm deep, with a quadrangular hollow (inside remains of an iron dowel). The base presents in two framed pannels reliefs of eagles standing on a thunderbolt holding a wreath in their beak; between the two eagles a Victoria is found standing on a globe and holding a tropaeum and a corona. On the fourth side there is the inscription. On the molded crest remains of an inscription, in part heavily damaged — now even more than at the time the base was found. L.3 of the inscription and the right part of l.5 were very carefully erased. The text, which is different from the first publication, reads as follows:<sup>19</sup>

*Pro salute et incolunitate / domini nostri / [[Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M(arci) Aur(eli) Antonini Aug(usti)]] / praesentissimum deum Mag(num) Sarapidem / leg(io) VI Ferrat(a) F(idelis) C(onstans) [[Antoniniana]] / Iulius Isidorianus p(rimus) p(ilus).*



Fig. 1

The main inscription refers to the dedication of an image of Sarapis, who is called *praesentissimus deus Magnus*. Most scholars consider this a dedication to Sarapis (and translate the accusative: “To –Sarapis”); at least literally this is not true, quite the opposite! An image, very probably a bust of Sarapis was dedicated as the accusative shows without any doubt. The cavity makes it clear that the representation of the god was sitting on a round basis; it is more than likely that this was a globe (fig. 2). Such

<sup>19</sup> W. Eck, Sarapis und die *legio VI Ferrata*. Die Weihung einer Sarapisbüste für das Wohl des Kaisers, *ZPE* 198, 2016, 211 ff.

representations of Sarapis we have documented on various objects.<sup>20</sup> Reckoning from the size of the globe — the diameter is around 34 cm — the bust was not less than 50-60 cm high. The epiklesis *praesentissimus* is used for various deities; it is not specific for only one god; see e.g.: *AE* 1983, 841 from Sarmizegetusa: *Numinibus praesentissimis Apollini et Bono Puero*; *CIL* VII 481 (Corstopitum): *manu praesentissimi Numinis*; *AE* 1996, 796 (Florida): *Numini praesentissimo [A]esculapio*. Sarapis is called *deus Magnus* in a dedication at Puteoli in Italy (*CIL* X 1594).

In almost all publications the legion is reconstructed in the genitive form, either connected with the following person, who was — one can be sure — *primus pilus* of that legion. Only O. Stoll<sup>21</sup> connected *legionis VI Ferratae* with *deum magnum Sarapidem*, making Sarapis the special protecting god of this legion. This does not seem probable; there is not one example of such a connection in the epigraphical sources (*CIL* III 14149,4 referred to by Stoll is not comparable). Grammatically *legionis VI Ferratae* cannot be connected with the following name of the *primus pilus*. The sequence should be reversed: *primus pilus* and then the name of the legion. Since the name cannot be connected to the preceding name of the god nor the following name, it seems clear that the *legio* is mentioned independently, that means also in the nominative. It follows that the *legio* and the *primus pilus* dedicated the base with the representation of Sarapis together.



Fig. 2

That the emperor, whose name was erased, was Elagabal and not Caracalla (as for example Bricault writes<sup>22</sup>) is made clear by the cognomen Antoniniana erased too; this cognomen of the legion was given by Elagabal and not by Caracalla (the name of Caracalla is also too long for the erasure in l.3).

On the upper edge of the base the following text can perhaps be reconstructed: *[Isidi Bub]asti VERE V[---]ERE[---]*.

If the reconstruction Bubasti is correct, then it would be certain that the altar and the bust of Serapis, as a consecration gift for the goddess Isis, were placed in a sanctuary consecrated to her. It is not surprising that statues or images of a god or goddess were dedicated in

<sup>20</sup> See W. Hornbostel, *Sarapis. Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte, den Erscheinungsformen and Wandlungen der Gestalt eines Gottes*, 1973, 260ff. with photos p. 248-50, 252-64.

<sup>21</sup> O. Stoll, *Zwischen Integration und Abgrenzung: Die Religion des Römischen Heeres im Nahen Osten*, St. Katharinen 2001, 472.

<sup>22</sup> L. Bricault – M.J. Versluys – P.G.P. Mayboom (eds.), *Nile into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman World*, 2007, 448-69 at 451f.

a sanctuary of another god or goddess. A soldier erected in Rome a statue of Hercules Defensor in a chapel of the *genius cohortis X praetoriae* (CIL VI 210 = Dessau 2103); in Ostia a woman consecrated a silver statue of a Venus to Isis Bubastis (CIL XIV 21 = Dessau 4373).

2. Altar or altar-shaped statue basis of local limestone, found in the middle of the eighties, near Lajun dedicated to Silvanus Sanctus (fig. 3). The text reads:<sup>23</sup>

[Pr]o sal[ute] / [A]emilii [---] / [---] / [.] Aemiliu[s] E[---] / [S]ilvano Sancto.



Fig. 3

Although in the text there is no hint that the dedicator of the altar was a member of the legion, it is very likely that it was a soldier or veteran or someone who was connected with the army. Otherwise one could not explain why Latin was used for the inscription.

3. Two so called bread stamps, found by Y. Tepper in 2005 during the excavation at the prison compound on the hill of the Megiddo police (Kefar 'Othnay). Roman military artifacts which have been found within the domestic building testify for families of soldiers at a civilian site, near the legionary base:<sup>24</sup>

a. (*centuria*) *Caecil(i)* | *Ter(t--i) Iul(ius)* | *Maxim(us)* (fig. 4).

The name of the soldier who used the stamp should stand in the nominative, not in the genitive as proposed as an alternative in the first edition. Centurions with the nomen gentile Caecilius are often attested. The cognomen could be not only *Tertius* (as in the ed. pr.), but also *Ter(tullus)* or *Ter(tullianus)* or *Ter(entianus)*.

<sup>23</sup> See n. 14.

<sup>24</sup> G. Stiebel, in: Y. Tepper – L. Di Segni, *A Christian Prayer Hall of the third century CE at Kefar 'Othnay (Legio). Excavations at the Megiddo Prison 2005*, Jerusalem 2006, 29-30.

b. (*centuria*) *Auti Lic(iniani/inius) | Priscus* (fig. 5).

It is not clear, if the centurion was only mentioned with his cognomen *Autus* (known from *CIL* II 6257,51 and XII 4734) or with the nomen gentile *Autius* (known from *CIL* VI 211; *CIL* XIII 1121). If the name was *Autius*, it could have been connected with a cognomen *Lic(inianus)*, or *Lic(--)* could be the nomen gentile *Lic(inius)* connected with the following cognomen *Priscus*.

The reference to a *centuria* shows that the stamps belong to the military area and are therefore related to the legion stationed there. Since the findings excavated in the prison compound on the hill of the Megiddo police certainly belong to the time when *legio VI Ferrata* was already stationed there, the persons mentioned, two *centuriones* and two simple soldiers, are members of *legio VI Ferrata*.<sup>25</sup> The daily communication inside the legion also required the use of the Latin language.



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

## II. New inscriptions from the area of Legio

In the following we present all epigraphic documents that were discovered during the last years in the course of the surveys and excavations in and around the legionary base and from the excavations at the site of Kefar 'Othnay.<sup>26</sup> The fragmentary state of the inscriptions does not allow a more precise dating. They belong all to the period between

<sup>25</sup> See also a Greek inscription at the mosaic floor at the Prayer Hall, mentioning 'Gaianus called Porphyrius, centurion (ἐκατοντάρχης)'. Y. Tepper and L. Di Segni (n. 18) 35-36 suggested that Gaianus choose to mention his position in Greek rather than Latin, inspite his active position in the Roman Army. According to cf. Marksches, above n. 18, this issue is a matter of speculation.

<sup>26</sup> Photos and drawing: W. Eck (figs. 1-3); drawing: Gisela Michel (fig. 2); H. Smithline (figs. 4-5, 10-11); Y. Tepper (figs. 7-9) and Michael Magen (fig. 6).

the beginning of the second century, when for the first time a legion was stationed there and the later third century when the legio VI Ferrata left the place.

*Ila. Inscriptions in and around the legionary base*

1. Fragment of a limestone plaque, broken on all sides, found in 2017 in Legio excavation (JVRP), in area C of the legionary base, on top of a drainage channel in the principia gate.<sup>27</sup> The letters are deeply cut into the stone. In the letters of the four lines remains of the red colour are preserved. Horizontal guidelines are visible in several places. All words are separated by strong markers.

Measures: Height 13.5 cm; width 12.3 cm; thickness 18-19 cm. Letters 2.5 -2.6 cm.

The reading is the following (fig. 6):

[--]+GI CA[--]

[--]FLAVIVS +[--]

[--]QL·T·FL·M[--]

[--]FL·GERM[--]

[--] +[--]

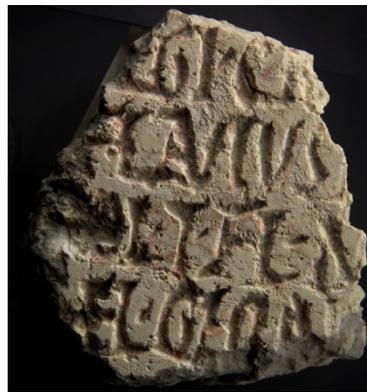


Fig. 6

It is not immediately clear what type of inscription this is. One can discern three persons with the nomen gentile *Flavius*, once — so it seems — fully written out, twice abbreviated as FL. But it is strange that after Flavius there is no separating sign. In line 3 the praenomen *T(itus)* is connected with *Fl(avius)*; only the beginning of the cognomen *M[--]* is preserved. In l. 1 at first one is tempted to read EGIO, but this is excluded, because after the I and the following letter there is clearly a separating sign. The meaning of l. 1 remains unclear.

Although several persons are mentioned this is not a list of names. The difference between the person with the fully written out Flavius and the two with abbreviated *Fl(avius/o)* speaks against this assumption. Therefore it is not clear that soldiers are mentioned here. It seem more likely that the inscription belongs to a private — of course — Roman context. It could be a family with a father, the name fully written out, and two persons depending on him, either children or perhaps *liberti* who got the nomen gentile from their master the moment they were enfranchised. The name Flavius is in the nominative; therefore this person has done something. It is not clear if the other Flavii are also in the nominative; it could also be the dative. In the context or the neighborhood of a legionary base either funerary inscriptions or dedications to goods are the most likely type of monuments we can expect. Since the inscription was found at the Principia gate, the last one is more likely.

<sup>27</sup> The excavation at the site (G-57/2017) on behalf of the JVRP and Albright Institutions of Archaeology, Jerusalem. See: Tepper Y. and M. Adams. *The 3<sup>rd</sup> season of excavation at the Legionay base. Legio, Israel* (in preparation).

2. Small fragment of a plaque of limestone found on the surface<sup>28</sup> in the center of the base. The piece is broken on all sides, the back is smooth. At the top of the fragment one can still see the remains of two letters. There are guidelines.

Measures: Height 4.75 cm; width 3.75 cm; thickness 1.87 cm. Letters 1.0 cm.

The reading is the following (fig. 7):

[--]++[--]

[--]CVM[--]



Fig. 7

CVM could be the end of a name in the accusative singular, like PRISCVM or GERMANICVM. A victory title like DACICVM or GERMANICVM is conceivable within a legion base with a reference to Trajan, under which the camp already existed; however, the small size of the letters rather speaks against such an understanding. If one does not want to assume an epitaph with a short text, but a 'public' inscription, then the letters should have belonged to a rather long text, since they [letters] are very small.

3. Fragment of a plaque of marble or limestone found on the surface<sup>29</sup> in the south-west area of the legionary base. The fragment is broken on all sides except at the top. Perhaps remains of a frame are visible there. If this is right, we have letters in the first and second line of the inscription, But the frame is damaged. Since the letters are relatively high: ca. 7 to 8 cm, the inscription could be part of a building.

Measures: Height 16.75 cm; width 8.75 cm; thickness 4.4 cm. Letters 7-8 cm.

The reading is the following (fig. 8):

[--]DIV[--]

[--]B/R[--]

If the upper edge of the inscription is preserved, and if we can suppose that DIV belongs to the first line of the text, then it is tempting to understand the letters as remains of

<sup>28</sup> The inscription was found during Y. Tepper's survey (license no. A-5150/2007) at the site, on behalf of the IAA. See: Y. Tepper. Megiddo-Yoqne'am-Megiddo Junctions, Survey (Road 66). Final Report. *Hadashot Arkheologiyot-ESI* 125. 2013 (English-Hebrew, 13.11.2013). [http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report\\_Detail\\_Eng.aspx?id=4371&mag\\_id=120](http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/Report_Detail_Eng.aspx?id=4371&mag_id=120).

<sup>29</sup> See n. 28.

DIVI, belonging to the filiation of an emperor who had divine ancestors. Trajan who founded the legionary castrum at Caparcotna and all his successors had such divine ancestors. Therefore one could guess a name of an emperor mentioned possibly in the inscription. The letter in line 2 could be a B or R. Both letters one can find in the name or titles of most emperors, for example in abnepos, in victory titles like Arabicus or Adiabenicus, in tribunicia potestas; more or less the same is possible for the letter R. All this does not help to identify the content and the date of the fragment.

The interpretation is different if the upper part of the fragment is not to be interpreted as the “remains of a frame”, but as part of a horizontal line defining letters as numerals in Latin inscriptions. Then we would have the number IV and the half preserved letter would not be a D, but could be also an O. The first reading is more likely.

4. Fragment of an inscription, found on the surface in the region of the Roman legionary Base, near Modern Megiddo Junction.<sup>30</sup> Broken on all sides, the back is smooth.

Measures: Height 5.5 cm; width 6 cm; thickness 2.5 cm. Letters 2.5 cm (fig. 9).

The reading depends on whether the letters are Latin or Greek:

Latin: [--]NYMH+[--] or

Greek: [--]NYMH+[--].

It is not clear if the letters are Greek or Latin, particularly the rest of the last letter remains obscure. The fact that after NYM (as the beginning of the word *nymphis*) there should follow a PH — letters which are not there — speaks against Latin letters.



Fig. 8

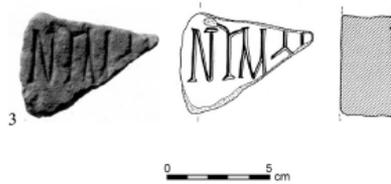


Fig. 9

### *Ilb. Inscriptions on the site of Kefar 'Othnay*

1. Fragment of a marble plaque, found in area N<sup>31</sup>, south-east from the prayer Hall (see above). Broken on all sides except the bottom. Part of two lines of legible letters are preserved; at the top minimal remains of a third line are visible, but not enough to identify the letters.

Measures: Height 10.4 cm; width 6.6 cm; thickness 1.5 cm. Letters 4.0 cm.

The reading is the following (fig. 10):

<sup>30</sup> See: Y. Tepper. *Legio in the Roman Period: A Historical and Archeological study with an emphasis on the Ethnic, Social and Religious components*. Tel Aviv University. 2014; license no. G-159/1998; G-2/1999.

<sup>31</sup> See n. 18.

[---]+++[---]  
 [---]VCT [---]  
 [---]ARGI[---].

The remains are too small to allow an understanding of the content. One can only try to discover something of the tendency of the content.

The letters ARG I in the last line should complete the content of the inscription. This could be the name of a person who was involved in whatever the inscription was about. Names like Largus or Gargilius would be possible. In the province of Syria Palaestina we know a consular governor Gargilius Antiquus.<sup>32</sup> His name could appear, for example, in a building inscription within the legionary base as in a building inscription from Hammat Gader at the end of the Commodus period, where we have in the concluding line: *curante / [Sex(to) Cornelio R]epentino leg(ato) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore)*.<sup>33</sup> The formulation here could be: *[sub G]argi[lio Antiquo, leg(ato) Aug(usti) pro pr(aetore)]*. But such a supplement can necessarily only be a very vague possibility. The sequence of letters could also refer to a word like *largitio*, *largitas*, *largissimus/a*, that is, to an act of generosity that someone else has shown. For example, at the end of an inscription from the border area between Germania superior and Belgica, the formula: *d(e) s(ua) p(ecunia) vikan(is) Vertillensib(us) largiti sunt*.<sup>34</sup> But even such a tendency remains absolutely hypothetical. This would change if something concrete could be connected with the three letters of the preceding line VCT. It would be tempting to guess the word *[aquaed]uct[us]* there. But a reference to the *[a]uct[oritas]* of a person would also be possible, very often emphasized in inscriptions. But all this must remain unproven and hypothetical.

## 2. Roman amphora handle.

Three letters around 1 cm high are impressed (fig. 11):

DOP.



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

<sup>32</sup> CIIP II 2122; G. Gambash – A. Yasur-Landau, ‘Governor of Judea and Syria’. A New Dedication from Dor to Gargilius Antiquus. *ZPE* 205, 2018, 158 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Eck, *Die römische Armee* (n. 17).

<sup>34</sup> *CIL* XIII 5661.

The handle belongs to an amphora of the type Dressel 20.<sup>35</sup> Until now no such sequences of letters are known. Attested are the following letter-combinations: DOM / DOMS / DOMF / DOR.<sup>36</sup> The letters represent an abbreviated Roman name, either consisting of praenomen, nomen gentile and cognomen or only the nomen gentile and the cognomen, if DO is to be understood as the abbreviation of the gentile Do(mitius).

That an amphora from the Baetica is attested in Judaea is not surprising, since the supply of the troops with oil came mostly from southern Spain.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See J.R. Rodríguez, Baetican olive oil and the Roman economy. In S. Keay (ed.), *The Archaeology of Early Roman Baetica*. JRA Suppl. 29, Portsmouth 1998, 183-199.

<sup>36</sup> G. Chic García, *Datos para un estudio socioeconómico de la Bética. Marcas de alfar sobre ánforas olearias*, Ecija 2001, 417, 507-509; P. Berni Millet, *Epigrafía anfórica de la Bética. Nuevas formas de análisis*, Barcelona 2008, 566 f.

<sup>37</sup> Another example of latin imprint, of the same amphora type, bearing the letters SR or SB, were found at Midrakh 'Oz, 2 Km north-west of the legionary Base. See: A. Raban. 1999. *Archaeological Survey of Israel. Map of Mishmar Ha-'Emeq (32)*. Israel Antiquities Authority. Site 122. Fig. 122.4: 6.