

## Roman Roads, Physical Remains, Organization and Development

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‘Milestones, they are more numerous than needed’, according to Sir Ronald Syme, ‘They may tell very little, often merely certifying stages and intervals on roads already known, traced and trodden: or, less instructive, the names and titles of an emperor. There are happy exceptions.’<sup>1</sup> Syme then proceeds to give two examples of such happy exceptions, both from Judaea. The first is a milestone of AD 69, marking the earliest known Roman road in the province, from Caesarea-on-the-Sea to Scythopolis (Beth Shean) and bearing the titles of Vespasian as newly declared Emperor and of the commander of the *Legio X Fretensis*, Marcus Ulpius Traianus, father of the future Emperor Trajan.<sup>2</sup> Then he focuses on discussion of what is now known to have been one of two identical milestones, dated between 72 and 79, both found in the excavations near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Syme’s interest in these inscriptions focused on the appearance of Traianus in 69 in Judaea on the first milestone, and on the identity of the provincial governor, whose name was erased on both milestones from Jerusalem. It would be of general interest to know the identity of a senatorial official in the seventies, who got in so much trouble that his name was removed from imperial monuments.

There is more, however. These milestones are the earliest discovered on the territory of the Province of Judaea. In other words, during the period when Judaea formed a sub-unit of the Province of Syria, administered by equestrian officials, the road-system of Judaea was not marked by inscribed milestones. This process was initiated only when senatorial commanders were in charge of Judaea as a separate province. It may be noted that these Flavian milestone-inscriptions are the only ones that mention the names of military commanders or governors in Judaea. On all subsequent milestones the provincial governors are not mentioned in the Province of Judaea / Palaestina, while they do appear on those in Syria and Arabia. There is no obvious explanation for this, other than tradition. One might consider the possibility that this, somehow, reflects the reality of the organization of the work in the various provinces, but there is no evidence to support this and it seems more likely that we are faced with habits or traditions of provincial administration.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Syme, *JRS* 68, 1978, 12-31, at 12.

<sup>2</sup> First published by B. Isaac and I. Roll, *JRS* 66, 1976, 1-6, reprinted in B. Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule: Selected Papers*, Leiden, 1998, 36-45. 76-86.

<sup>3</sup> First published by M. Gichon, B. Isaac, *IEJ*, 1974, 117-123; reprinted in B. Isaac, op.cit., .For the second stone: R. Reich, Y. Billig, *Atiqot* 44 (2003); cf. *AE* 2003. 1810; H.M. Cotton, W. Eck, ‘An Imperial Arch in the Colonia Aelia Capitolina’, in: J. Geiger et al. (eds.), *Israel’s Land: Papers Presented to Israel Shatzman on His Jubilee*, Raanana, 2009, 97\*-118\*.

Following the Flavian instances the next happy exceptions are milestones from Hadrian's reign, of the years 120, 129 and 130.<sup>4</sup> The milestones of 120 are particularly important, because some of these are found along the road from the legionary base at Legio-Caparcotna to Diocaesarea, which implies that there was a legion then, i.e. a second legion based in the province in addition to the legion X Fretensis in Jerusalem. The identity of the legion at the time appears to have been the *II Traiana*, but the relevant reading has been contested.<sup>5</sup> The milestones of the years 129 and 130 coincide with Hadrian's visit in the region, a visit usually associated with various measures that led to the outbreak of the Second Jewish Revolt. These then form the small group of milestone inscriptions from Judaea which have empire-wide implications. The last volume of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaee-Palaestinae* will contain all milestone inscriptions known so far, both those of particular historical interest and all the others that have less to tell us, but must be included in a proper corpus of inscriptions.

Next to be discussed is the information that has significant local or regional implications, notably evidence regarding the chronology of the road-system in the province. First to be mentioned is the most extensive group of milestones, found all over the region, including the provinces of Arabia and Syria, namely those of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus of 161/ 162.<sup>6</sup> It coincides with the beginning of the Parthian war of those years<sup>7</sup> and reflects a major project carried out as part of the preparations for the war. It is less clear whether this entailed real improvement of the road system or merely propaganda activity in the eastern provinces. Both possibilities must be considered, apart and in combination. For the Province of Judaea / Palaestina, this series marks the fullest extent of the road-system attested until the end of the third century, when a few roads were added in the desert region. So far then there is evidence of the organization of at least two roads in the Flavian period: the road from Caesarea to Scythopolis and another leading from Jerusalem to an unknown location, unknown because the milestones were found within the city and do not mention a destination. A number of roads are marked by Hadrianic roads, but this is a limited group, covering part of the province. This may be a random selection, the result of chance finds.

It is clear in any case that, by 162, the Roman road system in Judaea was fully developed. Milestones continued to be placed along the roads. This could have been for practical reasons: to replace damaged or fallen stones, or for the sake of diplomacy or propaganda, as declarations of loyalty to the rulers. An interesting example of the latter is the relatively large number of milestones from Judaea and Arabia, bearing the name and titles of Pertinax, who served as emperor for three months in the civil war of 193. Elsewhere I have argued that Pertinax's name may have been inscribed on the stones after the removal of that of Commodus whose titles have been recognized on inscriptions

<sup>4</sup> B. Isaac, I. Roll, *Latomus* 38, 1979, 54-66; id., *ZPE* 33, 1979, 149-156; J.R. Rea, *ZPE* 38, 1980, 220-221; B. Isaac, I. Roll, *ZPE* 47, 1982, 131-132. Apart from Rea's paper these have been reprinted with some additions in B. Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule*.

<sup>5</sup> See Rea (1980) in the previous note and the response published by B. Isaac, I. Roll (1982).

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, in other parts of the Empire, milestones of the reign of Marcus Aurelius are rare. This includes Central Europe where so much fighting took place during Marcus's reign.

<sup>7</sup> B. Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule: Selected Papers*, 1998, 51-52.

in Arabia.<sup>8</sup> During the subsequent half-century the pattern changed: we find milestones along all roads set up regularly, usually not for any obvious occasion. Exceptions may be the series of 198-199 which coincides with Septimius Severus second eastern campaign.<sup>9</sup> Severus himself visited Palestine in the autumn of 198.<sup>10</sup> Goodchild has observed that the year 198 represents the first major overhaul of the road-system in Syria.<sup>11</sup> Milestones of 212 and 213 partially coincide with the years of Caracalla's Parthian campaign: 214/5,<sup>12</sup> but those of 212 are rather early to be interpreted along those lines. In any case, their inscriptions include the formula: *vias et pontes restituit*.<sup>13</sup> The claim that roads and bridges were repaired is a general one, not referring to the specific road on which the inscriptions are found, but it may well reflect actual work carried out at the time. The same phrase is found on milestones of the same years in other provinces, suggesting there was an Empire-wide programme.<sup>14</sup>

It is possible, but cannot be ascertained, that milestone-inscriptions mentioning Severus Alexander (222-235), but not bearing any specific date should be associated with the Persian campaign of the years 231-233.<sup>15</sup> Relevant in this connection two Greek inscriptions dated 233 marking the coast road in Sinai.<sup>16</sup> This reinforces the possibility that the undated milestones of Severus Alexander from Palestine belong to the same phase.

Not long afterward at least ten milestones along eight roads bear the name of Maximinus Thrax (235-8).<sup>17</sup> In fact, numerous milestones, found in many provinces date to Maximinus' reign.<sup>18</sup> In other provinces the names of the emperor and his son were erased, but not in Judaea. We may note that two milestones bear the name of Maximinus rival Gordian I.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Op.cit. 52-3.

<sup>9</sup> P. Thomsen, *ZDPV* 40, 1917, 1-103, at, no. 255a; M. Avi-Yonah, *QDAP* 12, 1946, 84-102, at 100, no. 25; Y. Landau, *BIES* 28, 1964, 232; 234-235

<sup>10</sup> For the chronology, see J. Hasebroek, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers Septimius Severus*, 1921, 119-120; F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio*, 1964, 143; B. Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule*, 1998, 55.

<sup>11</sup> R.G. Goodchild, *Berytus* 9, 1948-49, 114.

<sup>12</sup> 212: P. Thomsen, op.cit., nos. 43; 46; 244; 276; 213: Avi-Yonah, op.cit., 96, no.12; 99, no.23; *AE* 1971, 472.

<sup>13</sup> B. Isaac, I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea 1: The Legio - Scythopolis Road*, 1982, 77-9, nos. 14-16.

<sup>14</sup> Pannonia Superior: *CIL* 3.4639; Helvetian territory: *CIL* 13 9061; 9068; 9072; Gallia Narbonensis *CIL* 12.5430.

<sup>15</sup> B. Isaac, I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea* 1, 80, nos. 18 and 19.

<sup>16</sup> *AE* 1973, 1976, nos. 559; 559 bis. For milestones in Arabia, probably dated to 230: P. Thomsen, op.cit., nos. 126e 1; 157; 164a 2. See also, however, a milestone of 222 from Arabia: *AE* 1991. 1589. See also *CIL* 10628; -30; -33; -50; -51; -55; -57; 11331; -35.

<sup>17</sup> P. Thomsen, op.cit., nos. 246a; 248; 249; 255b; A. Alt, *Palästina Jahrbuch* 25, 1929, 124-6; *AE* 1971.474; M. Fischer, B. Isaac, I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea 2: The Jaffa- Jerusalem Roads*, 1996, 294, no.3; two are unpublished.

<sup>18</sup> G.M. Bersanetti, *Studi sull' Imperatore Massimino il Trace*, 1940, 23-63.

<sup>19</sup> *AE* 1971.475; cf. Bersanetti, chapter 4 and comments by Barbieri, *Epigraphica* 4, 1942, 90-93; P. Townsend, *YCS* 14, 1955, 17.

Milestones of Vaballathus form a remarkable testimony of the short period of Palmyrene supremacy in the Near East.<sup>20</sup> Several were discovered in Arabia along the *Via Nova Traiana* and two west of the Jordan. There are two series. Those found in the territory of Palaestina belong to the earlier series on which Vaballathus appears as *Rex, Consul, Imperator, Dux Romanorum*, but not as Augustus. On the later series Vaballathus bears the title Augustus and has a string of victory titles: *Persico Maximo Adiabenico Maximo Arabico Maximo pio felici invicto Aug.* This is Vaballathus' titulature between December 270 and Spring 272. The earlier series coincides with the Palmyrene expedition to Egypt and may indicate the route followed by the army. There is evidence of destruction at Bostra showing that the Palmyrene army passed through the city.<sup>21</sup> As has been observed before, the Latin texts on milestones reinforce the impression from coinage that the Palmyrene rulers claimed Roman imperial rank.

The last stage to be mentioned is represented by that of Diocletian and the Tetrarchy and of Constantine. The first fact to be mentioned is that the army reform of that period removed many units from the settled area of the Province of Syria-Palaestina and transferred some of them to the South, besides stationing other units also in the South. The *Notitia Dignitatum* registers only three army-units north of Hebron.<sup>22</sup> The distribution of inscribed milestones in the region is unequal. In Syria and Arabia there is extensive evidence for the period 284-335. In Palestine, north of the Negev only one milestone of Diocletian and Maximian (286-305) has been found.<sup>23</sup> This marked the Legio – Scythopolis road and may possibly be connected with Diocletian's visit to the Galilee in 286.<sup>24</sup> We may note that, at an uncertain date in this period, Legio, near Megiddo, received city status and the name of Maximianopolis.<sup>25</sup>

Important for our understanding of the development of the road-system are Tetrarchic milestones found in the southern Arabah.<sup>26</sup> Three Tetrarchic and Constantinian milestations have been found, each of them numbering eight to 10 pieces, all of them

<sup>20</sup> B. Isaac, *The Near East under Roman Rule*, 1998, 70-71; T. Bauzou, in: P. Freeman, D. Kennedy (eds.), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East*, 1986, 1-8. At least one has been found along the coast road, north of Byblos: *CIL* iii 209a = 6728; *CIG* 4503b in Addendis p.1174, cf. R.G. Goodchild, *Berytus* 9, 1948-49, 118: 23 Feb. - 29 Aug. 271.

<sup>21</sup> *IGLS* 13.9107. Cf. M. Sartre, *D'Alexandre à Zénobie: Histoire du Levant antique, IV<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C. – III<sup>e</sup> siècle ap. J.-C.*, 2001, 979-982.

<sup>22</sup> *Not.Dig.Or.*, ed. Seeck 34.21; 47; 48. Cf. B. Isaac, 'The Army in the Late Roman East' in: *The Near East under Roman Rule*, 1998, 437-469.

<sup>23</sup> B. Isaac, I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea* 1(1982), 81, no.20.

<sup>24</sup> See E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, 1981, 536-7 with n.40; attested also in Talmudic sources: M. Avi-Yonah, *Geschichte der Juden im Zeitalter des Talmud*, 1962, 127.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. B. Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, <sup>2</sup>1992, 432-3. The name is first attested in the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* of 333, *Itineraria Romana*, 1 (ed. Cuntz, 95f.; *CCSL* 175. 13). It is uncertain whether it owed its name to Maximianus Herculus (286-304) or to Maximianus Galerius (305). However, while the latter was active in the East, the former was not.

<sup>26</sup> S.R. Wolff, 'Archaeology in Israel'. *AJA* 100, 1996, 725-6; D.L. Kennedy, *The Roman Army in Jordan*, 2000, 193; B. Isaac, 'Roman Organization in the 'Arabah in the Fourth Century' in: P.Bienkowski, K. Galor (eds.), *Crossing the Rift: Resources, Routes, Settlement Patterns and Interaction in the Wadi Arabah*, 2006, 215-221.

north of the Roman fort at Yotvata. One of those, found at Yahel, 12 m. north of the fort, gives the distance *ABOSIA* 12 m., i.e. ‘*ab Osia*’ or ‘*a Bosia*’ 12 miles. They are dated to the Tetrarchic and Constantinian reigns (AD 284-324). The existence of milestations along a road from Aela which continues northwards beyond Yotvata proves that there was a public road all along the Arabah in the Tetrarchic period. This previously had been a matter of controversy.<sup>27</sup> A riddle for the time being is the ancient name of the Roman fort at Yotvata. The customary identification of Ad Dianam, mentioned on the Peutinger Table, with Yotvata is a hypothesis, based on the traditionally recorded Arabic place name Ghadian and on the fact that it is the only significant site in the Arabah north of Aqaba / Elath. It must now be considered uncertain whether Ghadian / Yotvata is to be identified with Ad Dianam of the Peutinger Table,<sup>28</sup> for this name does not appear on the milestones just mentioned. Moreover in excavations at the fort an inscription has been found which may indicate yet another name:

Perpetuae Paci / Diocletianus Augus(tus) et / [[Maximianus Aug(ustus) et]] / Constantius  
et Maximianus / nobilissimi Caesares / alam costia constituerunt / per providentia(m)  
Prisci pr(a)esidis [[[provinciae ---]]] / [[[------]]] // Mul(tis) XX // Mul(tis) XL.<sup>29</sup>

For present purposes, however, it is important that there is evidence of the existence of a public Roman road through the Arabah, from Aela on the Red Sea, to the North, the construction of which coincides roughly with the reorganization of the Roman army which led to the transfer of numerous units to the South, notably the Legion X Fretensis from Jerusalem to Aela. The new road would have linked Aela with Aelia. Moreover, in roughly the same period, the Negev was transferred administratively from Arabia to Palaestina. Finally, it is worth noting that this road is but one of several organized or re-organized in the Tetrarchic period. Others are the *Strata Diocletiana* in the desert region south and south-east of Bostra,<sup>30</sup> the road from Umm el-Jemal to Umm el Qottein,<sup>31</sup> the Bostra – Qottein road,<sup>32</sup> and the road from Bostra, through Wadi Sirhan to Jawf.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> B. Isaac, ‘Roman Organization’, 2006, 215.

<sup>28</sup> The Peutinger Table records a road from Jerusalem to Elusa and from there to Oboda – Lysa – Gypsaria – Rasa – Ad Dianam. This corresponds with the known route from Avdat past the Ramon Crater and thence south-east past Meẓad Shāharut to Yotvata.

<sup>29</sup> I. Roll, *IEJ* 39, 1989, 239-260 (*ed. princeps*) interprets this as architectural terminology. I doubt that this can be correct. Werner Eck sees *Costia* as a place-name in the ablative: *Klio* 74, 1992, 395-400, but that would mean that Latin inscriptions from the same period have two different names for one and the same site. The inscription mentions a governor of Palaestina, Aufidius Priscus, who occurs also on inscriptions from Caesarea: *CIIP* 3. 1268; 1271; 1272.

<sup>30</sup> D.L. Kennedy, *Archaeological Explorations on the Roman Frontier in North-East Jordan*, 1982, 162.

<sup>31</sup> S.T. Parker, *ZPE* 62, 1986, 256-58.

<sup>32</sup> D.L. Kennedy, H.I. MacAdam, *ZPE* 65, 1986, 231-36; A.G. al-Husan, D. Kennedy, *ZPE* 13, 1996, 257-262.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. B. Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, <sup>2</sup>1992, 163-171.

The last phase in which milestones were placed along roads in the region under consideration is the reign of Constantine. They are found mainly in the North of the province.<sup>34</sup>

That this was the last phase is true in general for the Near East. In Arabia and Syria milestone inscriptions from the reign of Constantine are numerous,<sup>35</sup> while those that can definitely be assigned to a date later than 337 are rare throughout the wider region.<sup>36</sup> The question is: what happened afterward? There can be no doubt that roads continued to be maintained and used. In this connection it may be observed that, in Judaea – Palaestina at least, ancient roads have been found that were well maintained, but never marked with milestones.<sup>37</sup> It is therefore a plausible assumption that the custom of adding milestones and inscribing them with the rulers' names and titles no longer was part of the epigraphic habit. However, this is meant in a sense somewhat different from the one applied by MacMullen in his classic article which considered mostly private monuments: we, however, are here considering public monuments, not private ones.<sup>38</sup> As already mentioned: Julian occurs on milestones in Arabia in a manner that was clearly intended as propaganda. That may be an exception confirming the rule that milestone inscriptions ceased to be produced in the region after the reign of Constantine.

To conclude: what can we expect of the collection of milestone inscriptions to be published in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaearum-Palaestinae*? First, the re-publication of a limited number of inscriptions that are of broad historical interest. Second, an impression, necessarily incomplete, of the development of the system of public Roman roads in the province. Third, a clear connection in many — but not all — instances between major events in the region and work on the road-system or, alternatively, systematic propaganda activity along the roads. Fourth, it may serve to raise the question, of general interest, why, in the Roman Empire, there were some periods when public monuments were set up by the government, and others when this was not the custom.

### Select Bibliography

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<sup>34</sup> B. Isaac, I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea* 1, 1982, 82, no. 21 (AD 324-326); M. Avi-Yonah, *QDAP* 12, 1946, 97, no. 16 (AD 333-334). Both Constantinian inscriptions were secondary on these stones; P. Thomsen, *ZDPV* 40, 1917, 255c; J.H. Iliffe, *QSAP* 2, 1933, 120-121. The only one not from the North of the province was found on the Emmaus-Beth Horon road (333-334): M. Fischer, B. Isaac, I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea* 2, 1996, 294-5.

<sup>35</sup> See P. Thomsen, *ZDPV* 40, 1917, index, p.93; R.G. Goodchild, *Berytus* 9, 1948-9, 127.

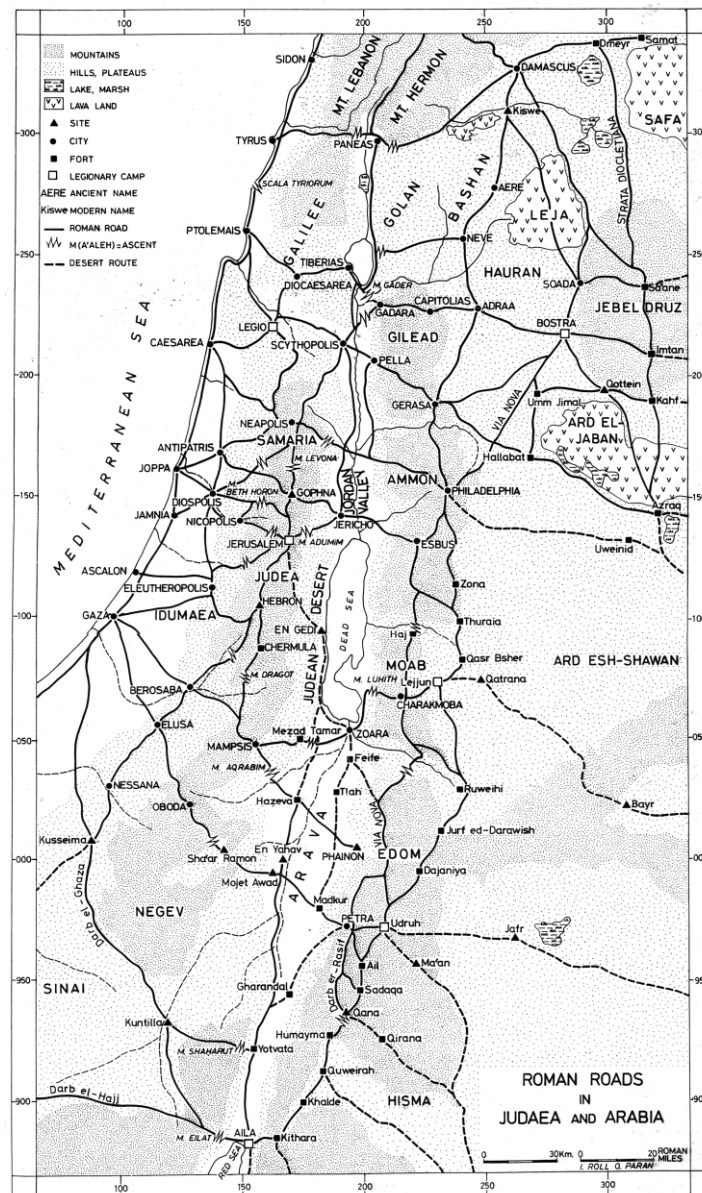
<sup>36</sup> See, however, for milestones in Arabia on which Julian's name was added: P. Thomsen, index, p.93.

<sup>37</sup> For a survey of several of those, see: M. Fischer, B. Isaac, I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea* 2, 1996, pp.98-107 and Y. Shahar, Y. Tepper, Appendix I and II. in op.cit., 108-112.

<sup>38</sup> R. MacMullen, *AJP* 103, 1982, 233-246.

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