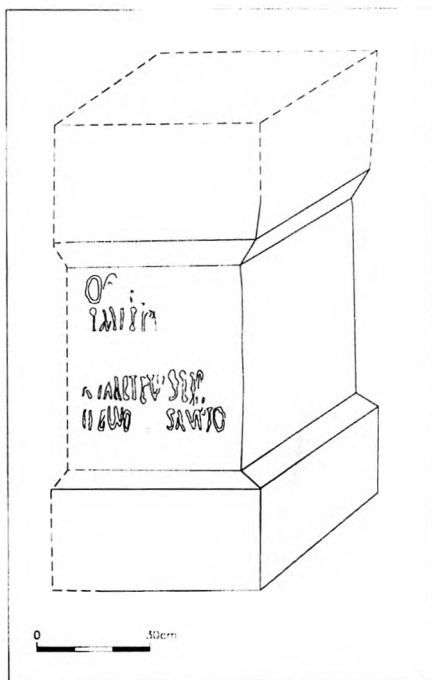


A Dedication to Silvanus near the Camp of the Legio VI Ferrata near Lajjun

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Late in the reign of Trajan or under Hadrian a second legion was transferred to the province of Iudaea/Syria Palaestina — the legio X Frentensis had been stationed here since 70 CE — and at the same time the province acquired consular status. It is not quite clear which legion was first transferred to Iudaea under Trajan or Hadrian, but by the end of Hadrian's reign, if not before, the *legio VI Ferrata's* camp was stationed near Lajjun.¹ Not much is known about this legion while it was stationed in the province of Iudaea/Syria Palaestina; the epigraphic evidence is particularly meagre: apart from a few tiles bearing the stamp of the *legio VI Ferrata*,² only an altar erected for the god Serapis with a Latin inscription dedicated by a *primuspilus* of this legion has been found in the area of Lajjun.³ The inscription published here is inscribed on a



¹ See now H.M. Cotton, 'The Legio VI Ferrata', in *Les Légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire*, ed. Y. Le Bohec, Lyon 2000, 351ff.

² These have remained so far unpublished.

³ *AE* 1948, 145.

monument found not far from the campsite of the *legio VI Ferrata*.⁴ This, combined with the fact that the inscription is written in Latin, makes it very likely that this monument, too, was dedicated by someone connected with that legion.



The monument is an altar or an altar-shaped statue-base of local limestone with moulding above and below the shaft. The top is almost totally destroyed; the lower part is better preserved. On the left side part of the shaft is lost, perhaps not more than the space for one or two letters. Originally the surface was very smooth, as can be seen at the bottom and on the right. The stone was obviously re-used in a building, as is proved by the mortar visible everywhere on the surface.

The piece was found in the middle of the 1980s near Lajjun; today it is preserved in the garden of Anat and Roni Degani in Moshav Hayogev.⁵

⁴ See Y. Tepper, 'Lajjun-Legio in Israel: Results of a Survey in and around the Military Camp Area' (forthcoming).

⁵ On 26 March, 1999 we were able to examine the inscription. We are grateful to Anat and Roni Degani for allowing us to study the text in their garden.

Height: ca. 122 cm; width: middle 52 cm, top 58 cm, bottom 55 cm (the left part is lost); thickness: bottom 57 cm, middle 47 cm. Dimensions of the inscribed surface: height 58 cm, width 52 cm. Letter height: line 1: 8 cm; line 2: 6.5 cm; line 3: unable to determine; lines 4-5: 6 cm. The red colour of the letters is partly preserved, perhaps because the stone was re-used and inserted in a building.

It is very difficult to decipher the text; in part the letters are destroyed, in part covered with mortar, so that no line but the last can be read in its entirety. The text is composed of five lines, with no line missing, as one can see on the right side where the beginning of the upper moulding is preserved.

The following letters seem to be legible in these lines:

1	..O..I
2	..EMILII
3	
4	.AEMILIV.E
. 5	ILVANO SANCTO

Only the last line makes immediate sense. The text tells us that the stone, obviously an altar or a base for a statue⁶ was dedicated to the god Silvanus: [*S*]ilvano sancto. The god of the woods and the pasture was very often called *sanctus*, holy. In many inscriptions we can find this *epiklesis*, for example in an inscription from Ostia: *Silvano sanc(to) sac(rum)*.⁷ Normally such a dedication begins with the name of the god; but sometimes the name stands in the middle of the dedicatory text; and in an inscription found on the Quirinal in Rome the text has, as here, the name of Silvanus at the end: ... *d(onum) d(edit) T. Flavius Sabinus Silvano sancto*.⁸

Inscriptions of this type normally mention the person who dedicated the religious monument, so we should expect a name, and with all probability a Roman name, since the use of Latin in Roman Iudaea/Syria Palaestina makes it almost certain that the dedicator possessed the Roman citizenship. In line 4 we can read: EMILIV; before these letters at the beginning of the line there is a partly legible letter with an oblique hasta going from left (at top) to the right (at the bottom); this could be an A. It is not clear whether after AEMILIV the remains of an S follow; if so, this S would be much higher than the other letters in this line. After this unidentifiable letter we could

⁶ Cf. for example *ILS* 3526: *S(ilvano) s(ancto) s(acrum) ... sig(num) cum base d(onum) d(edit)*

⁷ *CIL* XIV 52 = *ILS* 1592 = 3527. Cf. also *ILS* 3536, 3543, 3544, 3548.

⁸ *CIL* VI 31021 = *ILS* 3531.

read an E and perhaps a small Q; but this may be nothing but a flaw in the stone. With different light one would read a vertical stroke.

In line 2 the following letters seem clear: [.]emili. Perhaps an additional vertical hasta can be partially identified. Taken together with the name in line 4, this looks like the Roman *nomen gentile* Aemilius. If this is true then two people with the same name were mentioned, necessarily for different purposes. In line 4 the name seems to be in the nominative; so this Aemilius was the dedicator. It follows that the other [A]emilius was probably mentioned because the monument was erected in his honour. Very common at the beginning of a dedication for someone else is the formula *pro salute*. In line 1 only one letter is absolutely sure: the O near the beginning of the line. After O there could be an S, the upper part of an A only visible by the remains of the colour; finally, one can distinguish a vertical stroke. It is thus possible to restore this line as: [pr]o şa[ute].

In line three nothing can be read with any certainty. Probably there was some explanation about the Aemilius mentioned in the line before. Since the stone was found near Lajjun, the camp of the *legio VI Ferrata*, stationed since late in the reign of Hadrian in Iudaea, there is some chance that Aemilius belonged to this legion and that his rank was mentioned in line 3; but this has to remain a conjecture.

What relationship existed between the Aemilius in line 2 and the one in line 4 remains unclear. Perhaps they were brothers and served in the same legion; or they were father and son or patron and freedman. Any of these relationships might justify one party's erecting a statue or an altar for the health of the other.

All this taken together allows us to restore the following text:

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

For the health of Aemilius [---] Aemilius E[---] dedicated (this statue or altar) to Silvanus Sanctus.