

A Latin Inscription from A-Sumeiriya

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In December 1973, during construction of the turn-off of the main road Acco-Rosh Hanikra, a bulldozer pushed a mass of stones and rubble in order to form the foundation of the new road on its western side. In the rubble I found, at grid ref. 1590/2642, a stone bearing an inscription. The slab measures 55 by 35 cm. The front side is quite flat, like stones still found today on the beach, one km. away. The backside is irregular, the stone measuring 18 cm. thickness at its thickest point.

The fragment represents the upper left corner of an inscription. Its material is a rather coarse sandstone, locally called sifsif-stone. The beginning of three lines of script are preserved, containing 12 letters, one of them partly damaged. The letters are from 7 to 7.5 cm. high. Most characters being not of the conventional form, a reading is rather difficult and doubtful. The workmanship appears as coarse as the material, which adds to the difficulty of decipherment, and so does some damage done to the surface by the bulldozer.

As on the photograph some details of the characters do not appear clearly, a transcription may be useful.

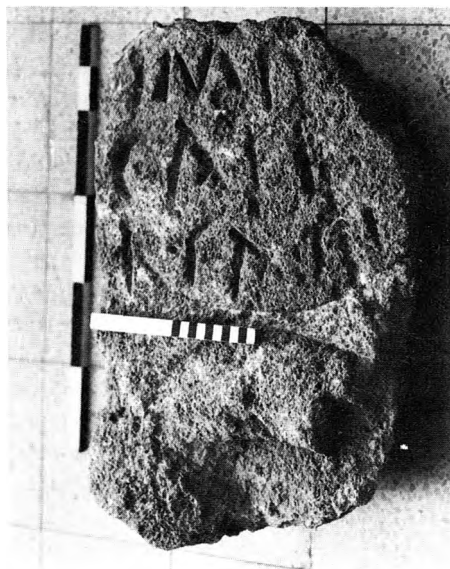
In line 1 the third letter might be read on the photograph as D. The transcription does not follow this impression, because there is a fresh scratch, made by the bulldozer, continuing downwards from this letter somewhat to the right, not belonging to the inscription. In line 2 the third and fourth letters clearly have a hasta. The additions, making them an F and an E respectively. are based on painstaking scrutiny of the stone, but are open to discussion. In line 3 the fifth (damaged) sign apparently shows the upper part of a hasta; the addition is, here too, open to discussion.

The form of the stone, whose lower part is without inscription, makes it appear like a stele. It may, however, also be thought of as the beginning of a longer inscription, which may possibly even have had its place above a door

IMP
CAFE
KATA

or another opening in a building. It may be a rather small part of a longer inscription. If the extant part of the first line is read IMP the name of an emperor may have appeared in the first line.

Nahariya



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