

Milestones with Uninscribed Painted Latin Texts

One of the impressive aspects of Roman civilization was the imperial road system, the basic outlines of which are preserved in the documents known as the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and the *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti* (Chevallier 1976: 28-37). One peculiar feature of this 50,000 mile long paved road system was the stone pillars (*miliarium*) set up to mark each mile of the various routes, i.e. at every thousand paces (*mille passus*, abbreviated M.P.), which is equivalent to every 1481.5 m or 4920 ft. The typical form of these stone markers or signposts was a square base, from which a cylindrical or oval-shaped column (2 to 4 m with a diameter of 0.5 to 0.8 m) projected upwards. The regularity of such milestones is evident along the *Via Nova Traiana*, the great trunk highway of the province of Arabia constructed under the Emperor Trajan between AD 111-114 that ran from the provincial capital at Bostra to Aela on the Gulf of 'Aqaba, or "*a finibus Syriae usque ad mare rubrum*", as attested in numerous inscriptions on the more than 350 milestones of the route (Pekáry 1968: 140-142). Approximately 8000 such inscribed milestones from the Roman empire are known either in Greek or Latin, but the finds are not uniform from province to province. More than 2300 are from Africa, 400 from Spain, 600 from Italy, 600 from Gaul and Germany, 100 from the Balkans, and another 100 from Britain (Hirschfield 1907: 165 with Chevallier 1976: 39-47). But only one is known from Sicily and Scotland, and none at all from Egypt in spite of the accumulation of new finds. The remainder are from the Greek provinces of the eastern Mediterranean.

Eventually all of these milestone inscriptions will be recorded in volume XVII of the *CIL* designed exclusively for the "Miliaria imperii Romani" to be published under the directorship of the Seminar für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik in the Historisches Institut of the Universität Bern and the Academy of Berlin (Walser 1988). The milestone texts for Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Arabia, will constitute fascicule 6 in this seven part series and volume XXI in the *Inscriptions grecques et*

latines de Jordanie being prepared by the Maison de l'Orient at Lyon. At the time that Thomsen compiled his still invaluable milestone corpus for the Levant in 1917, there were slightly over 600 known milestones for the region, but this number has increased significantly in the past 75 years. The inscriptions on these road markers are invaluable, since they provide vital information about the formation and development of routes and the distance in M.P. from the point of departure or terminus (Herzig 1974: 626-648). The typical inscription contains the name of the emperor (normally in the nominative case, but later in the dependent genitive) under whose reign and perhaps at times with whose support the construction or repair of the road took place, the executor of the work, normally an imperial legate but at times the local *civites* (with the emperor's name in the dative case), dated according to the imperial titulary and providing the distance or location on the respective route (Chevallier 1976: 41). Frequently, vestiges of the red paint that was used to emphasize the incised letters are still visible in the crevices of the inscriptions.

But the vast majority of milestones are anepigraphic, which has cast doubt about their nature (Grenier 1934: 72-73) and led to their characterization as either mere remnants of an earlier pre-epigraphic system or hastily erected road-markers of a later period (Chevallier 1976: 41). This interpretation may seem understandable, given the substantial number of epigraphic milestones that exist. But in general, at least in the East, milestones with inscriptions are the exception, rather than the rule, constituting only approximately 25 percent of the existing corpus (Roll 1983: 152). As a consequence, it has frequently been suggested that it is possible that some of the text was merely painted on the milestones, and has subsequently disappeared. For example, Scheidner observed that "Die meisten *m.* haben oben am Schafte eine eingemeisselte Inschrift; Steine ohne jegliche Inschrift finden sich nicht häufig, und wo welche zutage getreten sind....war die Zahl der Meile oder allenfalls des Stadions wohl aufgemalt" (1935: 397). Chevallier also pro-

poses that it was “likely that some wording was painted on” (Chevallier 1976: 41). In contrast to these minimal concessions, others have suggested that uninscribed columns may once have borne entire texts that were merely painted. For example, Butler speculated that the numerous anepigraphic milestones on the Trajanic road in Arabia perhaps once contained “letters on them [that] were originally only painted” (Butler 1911: viii). There are enough cases of merely painted texts on stone monuments to justify these suspicions (Di Stefano Manzella 1987: 142), but it is not just a hypothetical possibility that some milestones had purely painted texts. It has been generally unrecognized that there already exist a few such milestones with texts that are solely painted on the columns. Some of these are recent discoveries, but others have been known for some time, although for the most part unrecognized.

The following list of six such milestones with strictly painted texts in the Palestine-Syria region makes no effort to be comprehensive or complete. Other examples may exist, but inquiry among Roman road specialists outside of the Levant (such as Heinz E. Herzig, David French and Pierre Salama) indicates that they are unfamiliar with any examples in Europe, Turkey or North Africa. A survey of these finds may then be instructive for future discussions and explorations of Roman roads, as they imply that the practice probably prevailed elsewhere.

1. Ayl. Just 13 km southeast of Petra, Glueck recorded a fragmented uninscribed milestone (1935: 75 with FIG. 28), which we relocated in the field wall enclosing the reservoir and spring during our initial visit to the site in 1986. In a return visit to Ayl with Thomas Bauzou in 1988, we observed that there were traces of letters in red paint visible on the milestone (Graf 1989) (FIG. 1). It has subsequently been removed to the Petra museum through the cooperation of Dr. Ghazi Bisheh and Dr. Fawzi Zayadine of the Department of Antiquities. Only a few of the 12 lines of the Latin text are visible, but scattered traces of the letters of the other lines are also discernible (FIG. 2).

IMP(eratori) CAE[s]ARI
 GAI IULI VERI
 [Maxi]MINI A[ug]
 [nostri] ET [Gai]
 [iuli] VER[i]
 [Max]IM[i filii]
 [Aug] NO[stri]
 [nobi]LI[ssimi]
 C[a]ESA[ri]
 [sub Pomponio]
 IULIANO L[eg]
 AUGG P[r Pr]

From the vestiges of the text that are visible, it appears that it is to be dated to a Roman legate of Arabia named Julianus who served during the reign of *Augustorum duorum*. The names of the reigning imperial coregents have almost entirely disappeared, except for the initial letters GAI[us]. Based on the current available evidence, the most likely candidate for the governor is Pomponius Julianus, in AD 236 during the reign of [Gaius Iulius Verus] Maximinus Thrax and his son Maximus (Graf *fc. b*). The latter was elevated to Caesar by May 26 of AD 236, and although never formally obtaining the status of Augustus (Salama 1987: 38), is so designated with his father on occasion in Egypt (Ostrakon Viereck 48, *hoi kurioi hēmōn Sebastoi*) and Arabia (at Kafr al-Laḥā, *CIG* III.4585 with p. 1181, *ΣΕΒΒ* = Sebastōn, with the sole attestation of Pomponius Julianus as governor in AD 236). The latter lintel dedication reflects the common practice of *damnatio memoriae* for Maximinus, but secondary milestone inscriptions of the emperor on the *Via Nova Traiana* in Arabia show no such signs of erasure (Thomsen 1917: nos. 88d and 97b). Since the *fasti* of the governors of Arabia are rather spotty and Julianus is a common name for Roman officials, other possibilities obviously still exist. Nevertheless, if the present proposal is correct, this is the earliest of the known painted milestone texts.

2. At-Tuwwāna. On the *Via Nova Traiana* between Petra and ‘Ammān, several miles north of at-Tuwwāna, Germer-Durand reported two milestones. One bore a Trajanic inscription indicating it was M.P. 51 from Petra. The other is described as follows: “La seconde colonne est taillée dans un calcaire à gryphées tellement grossier et résistant, qu’il a été impossible de la polir et d’y graver un texte. On s’est contenté d’y tracer les lettres au minium” (Germer-Durand 1897: 580). The initial reading was later partially improved by Brünnow and Domaszewski (1904: 86 = Thomsen 1917: no. 146b = *CIL* III, 1414920). It appears to date to AD 333-337 and reads:

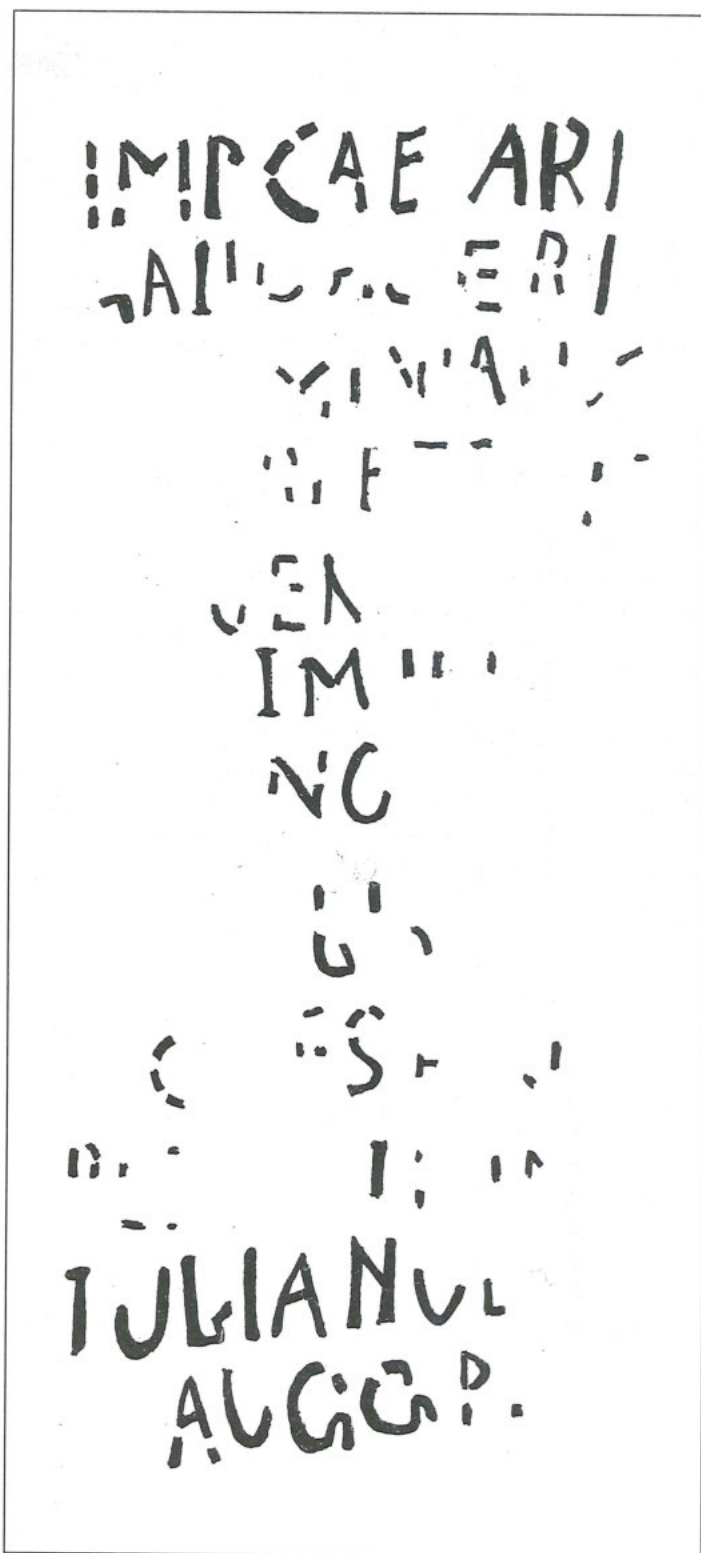
[D(ominis)] N(ostris) CONSTANTINO
 ET CONS[tant]INO...[p]RIN[cipibus]...P(iis) F(elicibus)
 AUGUSTIS ET...ET CONSTANTI
 NOBILI[ssimo] Caesari...NOBILISSIM...BUS N..

Thomsen noted that “Die Buchstaben sind rot geschriehen” (1917: 54 n. 1), but neither his observation nor those accompanying the *editio princeps* were duly registered in the later standard treatments of Roman milestones or roads. Even more of the text may have been readable at the time of Brünnow and Domaszewski’s visit, but they were forced by time constraints to continue on with their trip to Petra (1904: 86, notes “Do: [“wegen Zeitmangels unvollständig gelesen”]). In the recent investigation of the at-Tuwwāna region by Dr. Zbigniew T.



1. Ayl milestone with painted Latin text of Maximinus Thrax (no. 1).

Fiema (1992: 5; 1993: 550), this uninscribed milestone with a painted Latin text was relocated, but the only letters now visible are those of CONS[tantine] (FIG. 3). We may now deplore the fact that Brünnow and Domaszewski lacked the time to provide a more complete reading



2. Drawing of the painted text of the Ayl milestone (no. 1).

when the text was still fairly legible.

3. Al-Qarn. In the Jordan Valley, 4 km south of Pella near the agricultural processing plant at the village of al-Qarn, four or five shattered milestones were found in

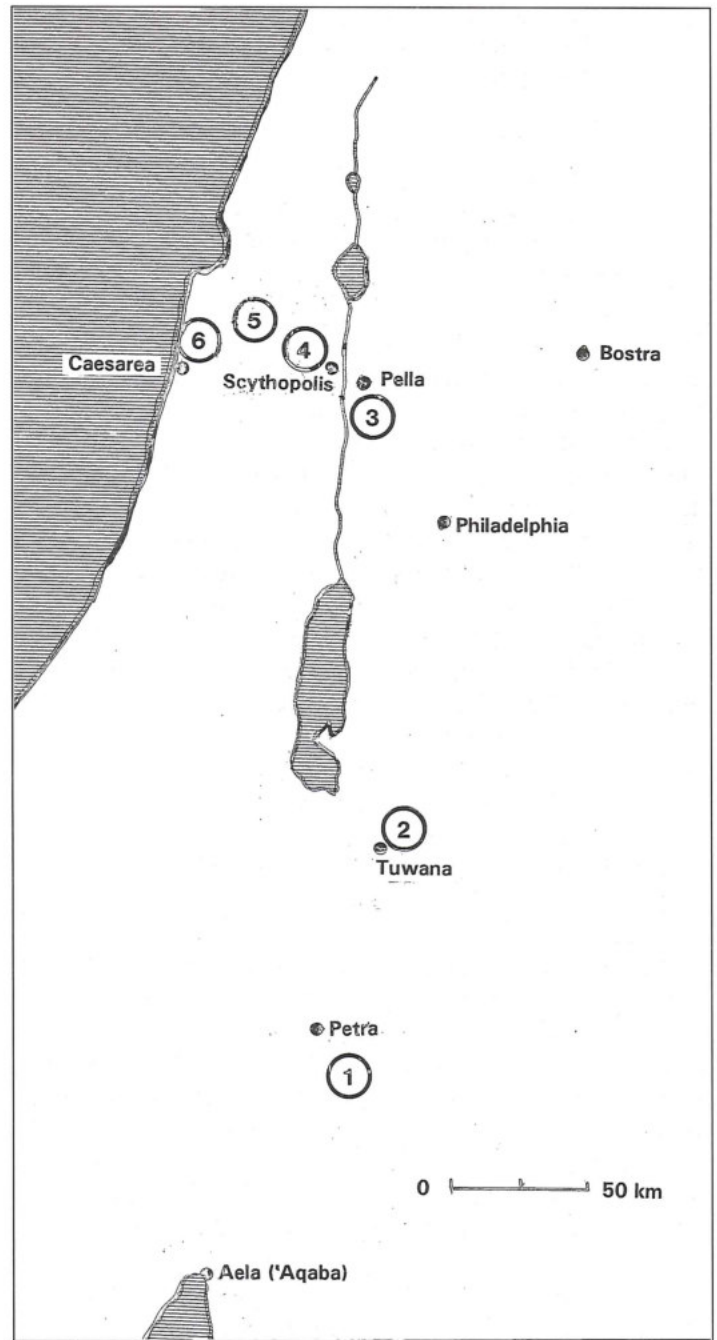


3. Milestone no. 2 with painted text of Constantine, c. 10 km north of at-Tuwwāna (courtesy of Z. T. Fiema).

1990 by Dr. Alan Walmsley of the Australian expedition at Pella and Sultan Shreidah of the Department of Antiquities in Irbid. One of these has been moved to the courtyard of the excavation house at Pella and bears an incised text of three lines.

IMPER(ator) C(a)ES(ari)
 FL(avio) VAL(erio)
 CONS[t]ANT(ino)

More significantly, two of the other milestones found at al-Qarn bear traces of red painted letters on the columns. Dr. Margaret O’Hea, the epigrapher of the Australian team at Pella, responsible for the formal publication of these finds, indicates that none of the letters appear legible. I want to express my appreciation to Dr. Walmsley of the Department of Semitic Studies at Sydney for bringing this important find to my attention and generously allowing me to mention it in this context. These newly discovered milestones are to be added to the other recent finds of the Roman road that ran parallel to the Jericho-Scythopolis road on the eastern side of the Jordan Valley (Mittmann 1970: 138-151). The previously published milestone texts of this road indicate that it existed at least from the time of Marcus Aurelius,



4. Location of the milestones with painted Latin texts.

demonstrating that the Constantine inscription is merely secondary.

4. Sarid. Located on the Roman road between Legio and Diocaesarea in Palestine (FIG. 4), this milestone bore an earlier mostly effaced inscription over which another inscription had been inscribed sometime between AD 333 and 337 (Avi-Yonah 1946: 97 no. 16). This second text consisted of six engraved lines followed by three illegible lines of strictly painted letters. The incised lines read:

dd (= Dominis) nn (= nostris) FL(avio) CONSTANTINO
 MAX(imo) P(io) F(elici) IN(victo) AUG(usto) ET
 CONSTANTINO ET
 CONSTANTIO ET
 CONSTANCE

[NOBB(ilissimis) CAESS(aribus)]

Even the engraved lines bore traces of red paint, but it was the completion of the inscription solely in red paint that is noteworthy.

5. Tall Tumis. In 1942, a milestone was discovered that designated the first M.P. on the Roman road from Scythopolis west to Legio in Palestine (FIG. 4). It was reported to bear an "inscription in red paint on plaster over the original engraved letters" (Avi-Yonah 1946: 100, no. 25), but the secondary text was merely painted. The inscription beneath the plaster was a bilingual Latin-Greek text from the reign of Septimius Severus, probably of the year AD 198. Of exceptional importance was the discovery between the third and sixth lines of the thirteen-line incised text of some traces of painted letters on the plaster covering. The Latin text dating between AD 324 and 326 was read as follows:

[DD NN] (= Dominis nostris)

[Flavio V]ALERIO CONSTANTII[no]

[Pi]O FEL(ici) CRISP[o]

[e]T FL(avio) CLAUDIO CONST[antino]

[et Fl(avio) Iul]IO CONSTANTIO

[Nobilissi]MIS CAESARI[bus]

Subsequent damage to the plaster prohibits any improvement in the reading (Isaac and Roll 1982: 82 no. 21). Nonetheless, this unique combination of a milestone inscription completed with purely painted letters, originally noted as "a case unique in Palestine" (Avi-Yonah 1946: 102), constitutes now only one more painted milestone text for the region. What is very distinctive is that the incised text is bilingual, perhaps because it designated the initial stage of the road (Isaac and Roll 1982: 74).

6. Ma'agan Michael. A group of six milestones were found in the late 1950s 3 km north of Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast (FIG. 4), with dates ranging from AD 161 to 238, i.e. from Marcus Aurelius to Gordian II (Avi-Yonah 1959-1960 = *AE* 1971: nos. 470-475). It was noted that the milestone of Gordian II dated to AD 238 was different from the rest: "Le texte n'est pas gravé, mais peint à la couleur rouge sur un enduit de plâtre, travail préparatoire qui fut rendu inutile par la nouvelle, survenue entre temps à Césarée, de la mort des deux empereurs" (*AE* 1971, p. 164). It has 11 lines of Latin text which reads:

IMP(eratori) CAES(ari) | M(arco) ANTONIO | GORDIANO |
 FILIO AUG(usti) | SEMPRONIANO | ROMANO | AFRICANO |
 PIO FEL(ici) AUG(usto) | PONTIF(ici), TRIB(unicia) |

POT(estate) CON(n)S(uli) | PRO[co(n)s(uli)].

It is possible that this milestone was only one of a pair erected to Gordian I and his son Gordian II, since this is the only such known text where the young prince is mentioned alone (Loriot 1978: 72). Even more important, it furnishes another example of a purely painted milestone text in addition to that of the one at Ayl (no. 1), suggesting there may have been a regular practice of merely painting Latin texts on uninscribed milestones in the third century AD. In contrast, the painted texts of later periods (nos. 2 and 4-5) appear to be solely of a secondary nature. This pattern of adding new texts to old milestones has been called a "fourth-century habit," particularly because of the practice of Constantine and his sons (Avi-Yonah 1946: 102; Goodchild 1948-49: 122; Salama 1987: 60-61), but there are abundant examples of such a practice even earlier in Phoenicia, Arabia and Palestine (Thomsen 1917: nos. 9-10, 88b, 263). The procedure in adding a new inscription to an old milestone seems to have varied. There are examples of four and five inscriptions being excised over each other, with the fresh letters painted in red after the stone had been whitewashed; sometimes before the letters were incised and painted, the surface of the stone was plastered to cover the older inscription and provide a fresh surface for the engraver and painter (e.g. Járdányi-Paulovics 1949: 58). The new inscription was evidently highlighted in red paint to make it easier to read. Other milestones may have been treated in similar fashion, but instead of incising the text, it was merely painted on the new plaster covering of the old inscribed milestone (nos. 4 and 5). In addition, many of the so-called anepigraphic milestones perhaps were never inscribed, but simply bore texts of solely painted letters on the whitewashed stone substratum or on a plaster covering that has long since disappeared.

One seeming allusion to this practice in ancient Chinese sources bears reexamination. In the description of *Ta-ch'in* or the Roman East (ch. 78 of the *lieh-chuan*) preserved in the *Hou Han shu* ("History of the Later Han Dynasty"), there is a passage that has been interpreted to read: "the postal stations and mile-stones on the roads are covered with plaster" (Hirth 1885: E6). This observation emanates from the records of the Chinese envoy Kan Ying's embassy of AD 97 to the region of the Persian Gulf, wherein observations are made about the Roman routes leading from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean (Graf *loc. cit.*). However, it is highly unlikely that the characters *yu* ("postal") and *t'ing* ("station" or "office") should be understood separately as two items that were "whitewashed" or covered with "plaster" (*chi o*). Hirth interpreted the character *t'ing* as a separate item referring to "milestones" (1885: 88), but it is preferable to take *yu* ("postal") as a modifier of *t'ing* ("station") re-

ferring to the lodges used by couriers on the official routes (according to my sinologist colleague Professor Edward L. Dreyer). Nevertheless, it is possible to infer from this allusion to the Roman custom of plastering road-stations that the milestones were treated in similar fashion. In fact, painted red texts may have been applied to both in assisting travelers with information about the various stages of a route (cf. Eusebius, *Onomasticon* 136.6-8 and 137.7 with Wilkinson 1981: 104, for the location of Mount Nebo by the *sexto miliario* on the road from Livias to Esbous).

For such a purpose, it seems likely that professional painters were part of a regular corps of technicians and craftsmen of both Roman civil and military administration in a province. Much of the road construction in the provinces was the responsibility of the army, requiring surveyors (*mensores*), stonemasons (*lapidarii*), and the engravers of the milestones (Chevallier 1976: 84-86). In fact, papyri from Egypt indicate that legionaries were engaged in quarrying stone for construction projects in southern Jordan in AD 107, immediately after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom (*P. Mich.* VIII [1951], nos. 465-466). It is entirely possible that their efforts are to be associated with the construction of the *Via Nova Traiana* (AD 111-114), for which Petra served as the initial *caput viae*. Painters may have been included in the number of military specialists or *immunes* associated with such projects (Lippold, "Malerei," *RE* 14 [1928] 881-898). Some support for this possibility can be found in the stele from Madā'in Šāliḥ in al-Ḥijāz that bears a Greek inscription mentioning "Hadrian, painter (*zôgraphos*) with the Third Cyrenaican legion" (Barger 1966: 218; 1969: 139). Such painters were used in the production of painted shields and parade armor at military factories at such locations as Sardis in Asia Minor and Antioch in Syria (Hanfmann 1981: 88). But painters also were required for official texts and various insignia, such as the traces of letters and numerals that survive occasionally on the stone barracks of Roman military camps. The painting of texts on milestones may also have been part of their normal operations.

Vestiges of the red paint used for inscriptions occasionally can be observed in the crevices of the incised letters. According to Pliny, the pigment used was called *minium* in the Latin-speaking world and was comparable to what the Greeks called *miltos* and *cinnabar* (*NH* 33.116). The inorganic variety (mercuric sulphide) was extracted from red ores primarily found in Spain and Asia Minor, but also from other regions including the East, where red pigment was produced from a variety of sources (W. Kroll, *RE* 15 [1932] cols. 1848-1854). For example, the so-called Indian cinnabar (*dracaena cinnabari* or "dragon's blood") was exported from Socatra to Roman Egypt in the first century AD (*Periplus Mari*

Erythraei 30). In general, painters used cinnabar or minium for decorating books and brightening the letters in inscriptions on walls and monuments (*NH* 33.116-118), but there were distinctive and important differences between the various pigments. Minium was better for painting exposed to the elements, although the toxic and poisonous nature of mercuric sulphide known popularly as red lead was recognized as a problem. In particular, Egyptian and African red ochre was especially practical, since it was readily absorbed by plaster (*NH* 35.35) and better for exterior painting, since metallic pigments are more resistant to weathering and sunlight. In contrast, organic pigments are less durable than the inorganic pigments, even if they are initially brighter, cleaner and more vivid. As a result, it was preferable to utilize a combination of both organic and inorganic elements. Thus, the "Syrian" type was frequently mixed with cinnabar (*NH* 35.40) and minium (*NH* 33.120) to improve the quality. By modifying the high viscosity of the inorganic pigments, the mixture provided improved flow and absorptive qualities for binding to the substrate, i.e. the addition of an oil or resin to red ochre was especially helpful for penetration of porous limestone or sandstone. (My appreciation to John D. Graf, Technical Manager of the Chicago branch of Toyo-Dupont International Ink, for his valuable contributions to this discussion).

Of course, painting as a medium for texts in various scripts is not an unknown phenomenon in the Levant. Numerous examples exist from the Iron Age through the Byzantine eras, and the practice must be of long antiquity (cf. *Deut.* 27:2-3), especially as writing systems developed more fluidity and became adaptable for painting as a medium. Among the earliest examples are the recent discoveries of eighth-seventh century BC "Canaanite" texts written in black and red ink on plastered walls at Dayr 'Allā in the Jordan Valley (Hoftijzer and van der Kooij 1976) and Kuntillat 'Ajrūd in the southern Naqab (Meshel 1978). In the Classical era, painted funerary texts became common as early as the Hellenistic period, as is evident from the painted Greek texts found in tombs at Sidon, the product of Seleucid mercenaries serving in the area (Jalabert 1904). Just as prevalent was the use of painted letters on commercial objects. For example, monograms on pottery were frequently just painted, such as those at Tall Jammah, 12 km south of Gaza in Palestine, where a local Hellenistic storage jar discovered has a painted monogram on its shoulder reading 'abum in South Arabian (Van Beek 1983: 19). In South Arabia, one of the amphorae sherds found in the recent excavations at the ancient Ḥaḍramawt port of Qanā has a reddish-orange painted Greek inscription and another has a monogram reading l'n painted in red on its shoulder and a cursive Palmyrene text scratched on its neck (Sedov 1992: 116-118, and discussed by F. Shelov-

Kovedyaev on pp. 136-137). Such examples could easily be multiplied, but these are sufficient to illustrate the widespread nature of purely painted texts and letters.

The region of Petra itself was no stranger to the practice of using paint for both artistic and writing purposes. Nabataean pottery provides a prime example of durable red paint used in the firing process, surviving in the multiple designs and decoration on bowls and other fine ware. This paint was undoubtedly produced from the local ores available in the region (Mason and 'Amr 1993: 207). In fact, vessels found on the floor of the painters' workshop in the western complex of the Winged Lions Temple contained mixed paint in a variety of colors (red, white, black, green, yellow, blue), some blue pigment balls, and fibrous gypsum probably used as a binding agent (Hammond 1987: 130). The same paints and pigments used for the interior walls (Muratoff 1935; Barbet 1985) were readily accessible for writing on plaster, stone or ceramic materials elsewhere. From the rooms adjacent to the same painters' workshop, Aramaic and Greek graffiti were found on plaster fragments and sherds of Nabataean fine red ware that were written with a black inky substance (Hammond 1986: 162). North of Petra, at the entrance to Siq Umm al-'Aldā on the route leading west to Gaza, there is a Byzantine military Greek graffito painted in large red letters across the base of a Nabataean inscribed cartouche and two pyramids of an incised funerary stele on a rock cliff (Zayadine 1993: 92). Similar black inked Nabataean Aramaic and Greek texts as those at Petra have been discovered in a minuscule script 8-10 mm on the interior plastered temple walls of the Nabataean sanctuary of Allat at Wādī Ramm (Savignac and Horsfield 1935: 263-270). At nearby Hdayb al-Fala, 12 km to the southeast of Wādī Ramm in the Ḥismā desert of southern Jordan, pre-Islamic Thamudic graffiti were painted in a similar black inky substance on a large overhang of an *inselberg* (Jobling 1982: 470). These illustrations of the employment of paint by the local indigenous population suggest it was also probably used extensively for official purposes in the Roman imperial period.

This assumption is supported by several examples of Greek and Latin dedicatory texts of the third century AD in which some lines, words or letters are merely painted, rather than inscribed. One is on an altar discovered at the entrance to the chapel tower of the Temple of Be'1 at Dura which bears a Greek dedication to Jarhibol the Palmyrene sun deity by the tribune Scrobonius Mucianus (Hopkins 1931: 90, no. H3). The incised letters of the text are marked in red, but others are merely painted, such as the *rho* in the name Scrobonius, the ending of the word *chiliarchos*, and the words *kata keleusin* in the last line. A similar inscribed and painted Greek text was discovered on an alabaster stone found in a private house in

the center of Dura not far from the Roman camp. It bears the nine line epitaph of Julius Terentius, the tribune of an auxiliary cohort in which the last part of line eight and the final line are painted in red, whereas the rest of the text is inscribed. It is possible the red paint was a guide to the stone-cutter and left in an incomplete state, but since the lower part of the stone contains cracks and blemishes, it appears the engraver was probably forced to cease cutting the letters and use mere paint for the remainder of the text (Rostovtzeff *et al.* 1944: 176-182, no. 938). Another example of a partially painted text is the Latin temple dedication of Marcus Celerinius Augendus, a prefect of the *ala Pannoniorum*, which was offered to the *dii campestris* at Gemellae on the confines of the Sahara. The first three lines are engraved, but, after the middle of line four, the remainder of the text is merely painted (Mallon 1955). This use of paint for texts involving Roman military personnel suggests that it had larger administrative purposes, including the supplying of texts for milestones.

Purely painted texts on uninscribed milestones would help explain the existence of so many "anepigraphic" road-markers in the East and perhaps elsewhere (cf. Walser 1974). Such painted texts were probably an economical measure for marking the many stages of a route, saving both time and labor, especially in the more arid regions of the east and during periods of political turmoil. Centuries of exposure and weathering have evidently erased much of the evidence of what appears to have been a widespread procedure of just painting texts on plastered or whitewashed milestones. In tracking Roman routes, piles of milestones are frequently encountered at regular intervals in groups of four to ten. The normal procedure has been to inspect all the columns for any signs of incised letters and ignore those which have only smooth surfaces. The examples cited above suggest each milestone should also be inspected for any traces of paint or plaster. Even illegible traces of red painting on the stone surface may indicate that either the text has deteriorated or represent the residue of the pigment on the stone substratum after it penetrated the absorptive plaster. More importantly, vestiges of a purely painted text may be found on the milestone that will contain additional information about the history of the road. Such careful examination of anepigraphic milestones in other regions of the empire may produce even more painted texts, which at present seem restricted to the Levant.

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AE = *L'année épigraphique*.

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