

# A Greek Inscription from the Forum of Amman - Philadelphia. AD. 189.

by : Fawzi Zayadine

During the last three years, clearance and excavations of the Amman-Philadelphia Forum have been undertaken by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, supported by U.S.Aid Dev. Agency. As a result of this development program, the original floor of the Forum and its porticos have been exposed. On September 9th, 1968, two inscribed architrave blocks were discovered, the first one (pL. XXII) no.1 near the eastern parados of the theater and the second one about 15m. west of the first block. They belong, as the inscription indicates, to the entablature of the Forum's portico, though they are not decorated like the 7 blocks still in place upon the 8 standing columns, in front of the western parados. (pL. XXII, 1,2).

The two blocks are of hard grey limestone and measure :

N 1 : L. : 2,75 m

H. : 0,80

W. : 0,90

N 2 : L. : 2,72

H. : 0,78

W. : 0,86

The inscription consist of one line on each block pL. ( XXII, XXIII ). Monumental rounded alphabet, nicely cut, with many ligatures. Small and large letters H. : of letters : 20 cm,

## Greek text : Transliteration

N 1 : (PH) ILADELPHEON TON KATA KOLLEN SURIAN E POLIS TO  
TRIS

N 2 : TOON EKTISEN ETEI BNC EP I KUINTOU Ph (space)

Translation : The City of Philadelphia by Ceole-Syria built the triple portico in 252 in the time of of Quintus F (space).

## Notes :

**Philadelphion ton Kata Kollen Surian:** The coins of Philadelphia in the second c.A.D. bear the legend: Philadelphion Koiles Surias. (1) In this case **Kata** (by) would mean that Philadelphia was an autonomous city-state and was not related to Coele-Syria. The city of Alexandria was located, according to M. Roztovtzeff, **pros Aigyptoi** or **Kata Aigypton** (by Egypt ). (2)

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1. G. F. Hill, Cat. of Greek Coins, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia, P. 40, 18.
  2. Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World, Vol: 1, P. 415.

**To Tristoon :** This is a clear designation of the three porticos of the forum. I am indebted to Prof. D. Schlumberger for the reading of this word which proves that the Philadelphia Forum was surrounded by three porticos and not four as would have been expected. Those three porticos are by now exposed on the east, west, and south sides of the forum. To the northern side there was no portico because of the *cardo maximus*, which "stretched from one end of the City to the other on the north bank of the stream, at varying distance from it and at a level of 4 to 8 meters above it". (3) A *tristoon* is mentioned in Phrygia (Asia Minor), (4) and another one in the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (5).

**Etei BNC:** in the year 252=189 A. D. : this date is to be calculated on the basis of the Pompeian era, which starts on B.C. 63 in Philadelphia, Gerasa and Pella, as has been demonstrated by A. Alt (6) and H. Seyrig. (7) The inscription began probably with a dedication to the Roman emperor as many inscription of Gerasa show. The dating of the forum in the second c.A.D. fits well with the architectural development of the City at that period and with the style of the Corinthian capitals still in place. (8) Another Greek inscription which may belong to the theater is dedicated to Antoninus Pius.

**Epi Kuintou:** in the time of Quintus: This highly ranked person could be the Governor of the Provincia Arabia. His surname is missing and his gentilicium could be read Flavius or Fabius or any other gentilicium beginning with F. (9) The space after the letter F could mean that the gentilicium has been abbreviated, which is not very common but have parallels. The surname is missing and could not be deduced from lists of Roman governors now available. There is a Q. Flavius Balbus, governor of the Provincia Arabia, but in the time of Septimius Severus (193-211) (10): We hope that further excavations will provide the missing informations.

The importance of this inscription need not be emphasized. Amman has yielded very few dated inscriptions in comparison with Gerasa and other Greco-Roman cities. But this situation is partly due to the limited area which have been excavated till now.

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3. H. C. Butler, *Prince. Exp.* 11 A, P. 36. See the plan of Philadelphia, in which Butler has correctly restored three porticos.
  4. Cagnat, *In. Gr. Rom. Per.* IV, 662. L. Robert, *La Carie*, Tome II, 1954, P. 325, n.6 writes "Nous traitons ailleurs du mot *tristoon*"; it is indeed hard to tell where in ?
  5. Vincent et Abel, *Jerusalem Nouvelle*, p. 235; Weigand, *ZDPV*, 46, 1923, p. 196 ff.
  6. *ZDPV*. LV, 1932, p. 128ff.
  7. *Syria*, XXXVI. 1959, p. 71.
  8. Ed. Frezouls, *Syria*, XXXVI, 1959, p. 225 : "A Philadelphie, les chapiteaux du portique invitent a placer le grand theatre au milieu du II siecle ou un plus tard." The author did not mention the dedication to Antoninus Pius.
  9. For the abbreviation of Flavius see' *Q.D.A.P. sup.* IX, p. 107-108. For Fabius, see, *Groag et Stein, Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, Vol. III.
  10. Brunnow and von Domaszewski, *Provincia Arabia*, III, P. 290-291